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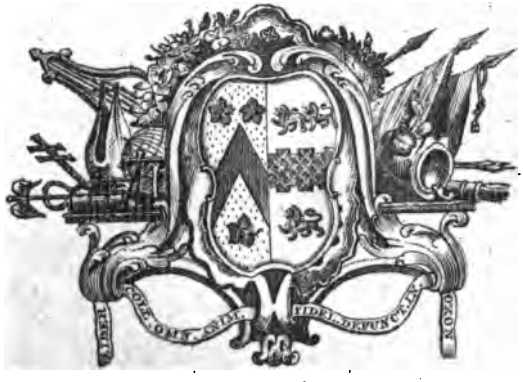

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SERMONS

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH OF

the late

REV. JAMES SAURIN,

PASTOR OF THE FRENCH CHURCH AT THE HAGUE.

VOLUME II.

ON THE

TRUTH OF REVELATION.

Peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God.---St. PETER.

BY ROBERT ROBINSON.

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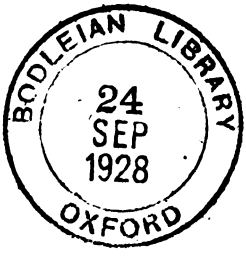
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THE PREFACE.

THAT spirit of inquiry, which produced the reformation, operated in France, as in all other countries; and gave being to an endless variety of different sentiments of religion. All the reformers, however, agreed in one grand article, that is, in substituting the authority of the holy scriptures in the place of the infallibility of the bishop of Rome.

The elevation of an obscure book, (for such, to the shame of popery, the bible had been,) to the dignity of a supreme judge, whose decisions were final, and from which there lay no appeal, naturally excited the attention of some who were capable, and of many who thought themselves so, to examine the authenticity of so extraordinary a book. At the reformation, the infallibility of the pope was the popular enquiry; and after it, the infallibility of Jesus Christ came under consideration. Curiosity and conscience concurred to search; and several circumstances justified the inquiry.

Many spurious books had been propagated in the world; the Jewish nation, and the Romish church, paid as much regard to tradition as to the holy scriptures; protestants derived different, and even contrary doctrines from the same scriptures; the authenticity of some books of both testaments had never been universally acknowledged; and the points in litigation were of the last importance. These considerations excited the industry of a multitude of critics. One examined the chronology of the bible, another the geography of it, a third its natural philosophy, a fourth its history; one tried its purity by the rules of grammar; another measured its style by the laws of rhetoric; and a most severe scrutiny the book underwent.

Nothing came to pass in this enquiry but what might have been expected. Some defended the book by solid, and some by silly arguments; while others reprobated it, as void of any rational proof at all. There are certain pre-requisites essential to the investigation of truth, and it is hardly credible

that all who examined, or who pretended to examine, the divinity of the christian canon possessed them.

No sooner had Charles IX. published the first edict of pacification in France in 1562, than there appeared at Lyons, along with many other sects, a party who called themselves DEISTS. The edict provided, that no person should be prosecuted on account of matters of conscience, and this sect claimed the benefit of it.

Deists differ so much from one another, that it is hard to define the term *deism*, and to say precisely what the word stands for. Dr. Clarke takes the denomination in the most extensive signification, and distinguishes deists into *four* sorts.

"The *first* class believe the *existence* of a Supreme Being, "who made the world; but who does not at all concern "himself in the management of it.

"The *second* consists of those, who believe not only the "being, but also the *providence* of God with respect to the "*natural* world; but who, not allowing any difference be- "tween moral good and evil, deny that God takes any notice "of the morally good or evil actions of men; these things de- "pending, as they imagine, on the arbitrary constitutions of "human laws.

"The *third* sort, having right apprehensions concerning "the natural attributes of God, and his all-governing provi- "dence, and some notion of his *moral perfections* also, yet "being prejudiced against the notion of the immortality of "the human soul, believe that men perish entirely at death, "and that one generation shall perpetually succeed another, "without any future restoration, or renovation of things.

"The *fourth* consists of those, who believe the existence "of a Supreme Being, together with his providence in the "government of the world, as also the obligations of *natural* "*religion*: but so far only, as these things are discoverable "by the light of *nature* alone, without believing any divine "revelation. These last are the only true deists."

The rise of the deists, along with that of other sects and parties among the reformed churches, seemed to confirm one argument of the Roman catholics against the reformation. When the reformers had pleaded for the sufficiency of revelation, and for the private right of judging of its meaning, the divines of the church of Rome had always replied, that unanimity in the faith is the test of the true church of Christ; that the church of Rome had always enjoyed such an unity;

that

that the allowance of liberty of conscience would produce innumerable opinions; that people of the same sentiments would associate for the support and propagation of their pretended faith; and that, consequently, religious parties would counteract one another, to the entire subversion of christianity itself. Hence they inferred the absurdity of that principle, on which protestanism stood, and the absolute necessity of a living infallible judge of religious truths. The event above-mentioned seemed to confirm this reasoning.

When these ideas entered the mind of a man of fruitful genius in the church of Rome, they operated in the most eccentric manner imaginable. A popular orator, or, who did ten times more mischief, a court-chaplain, would collect a few real improprieties among protestants, subjoin a thousand more irregularities of his own invention, mere creatures of his superstitious fancy, paint them in colours the most frightful, exhibit them to public view under images the most tragical, ascribe them all to that horrid monster the right of private judgment, and by these means endeavour to establish the old system, that destroyed men's lives, on the ruins of that new one, which benevolently proposed to save them.

The weaker protestants were intimidated by this vile bombast, and the wiser, who had been educated papists, that is to say, whose tender minds had been perverted with a bad philosophy, and a worse divinity, were hard pressed with this idle argument. The famous Peter Viret, who was pastor of the reformed church at Lyons, at this first appearance of the deists, not only wrote against them; but, we are sorry to say, he did more, he joined with the archbishop's vicar in persecuting them. What a motley figure! The voice of Jacob, and the hands of Esau!

Some of the more candid protestants contented themselves with making two observations, which they thought, were sufficient to answer the objections of Rome on this article. First, they said, it is not true that there are no religious controversies in the church of Rome; there are two hundred and thirty-seven contrarieties of doctrine among the Romish divines. Secondly, if it were true, the quiet of the members of that church would not prove their unity in the faith. A negative unanimity, that is, a freedom from religious differences, may proceed from ignorance, negligence, or fear: the two first resemble the quiet of night, when all are asleep, or the stillness of a church-yard, when all are dead; and the last is the taciturnity of a slave under a tyrant's rod. These

observations

observations were not impertinent, for although none of our disputes are managed without humbling marks of human infirmity, yet, on a cool balance of accounts, it will appear, that the moral good produced by liberty of conscience is far greater than the moral evil suffered. Peevish tempers, and puerile mistakes, mix with free inquiry: but without inquiry fair and free we should have no religion at all.

Had the protestants done only that with the writings of Moses and Paul, which they did with the writings of Homer and Tacitus, had they fetched them out of dusty holes in libraries, exposed them to public view, and left them to shift for themselves, their authenticity, we presume, would have shined with inimitable lustre; for fewer objections have lain against the book, than against the methods, that have been used to enforce it. But that fatal notion of uniformity, this absurd dogma, unity in the faith is the test of a true church, misled those worthy men, and they adopted the spirit of persecution, that child of *the mother of abominations*, Rev. xvii. 5. whom folly had produced, and whom cruelty had hitherto maintained.

In order to vie with the church of Rome in point of uniformity, and to excel it in point of truth, the reformers extracted, what they supposed, the sense of scripture; not on plain, obvious, essential truths; but on doctrines extremely perplexed, and difficult; these extracts they called confessions of faith, these they signed, and all, who refused to sign them, they disowned, and persecuted out of their communities.

Having done these things, *not according to the pattern shewed* by their divine Master in his plain and peaceful sermon on *the mount* of Olives, Heb. viii. 5. but according to the *arcana imperii* of the *woman, who sitteth on seven mountains, and who reigneth over the kings of the earth*, Rev. xvii. 9. 18. they boasted of enjoying as good an uniformity as that of which the catholic church vaunted.

If they, who first prosecuted these unrighteous measures in the protestant churches, could have foreseen the dismal consequences of them, surely they must have lain in sackcloth and ashes to lament their anti-christian zeal, which, by importing exotics from Rome, by planting them in reformed churches, and by flattering the magistracy into the dirty work of cultivating them, spoiled the growth of reason and religion, and cherished under their deleterous shade nothing but that unprofitable weed, implicit faith.

Let

Let a dispassionate spectator cast his eye on the christian world, and when he has seen the rigorous measures that have been used to *establish*, as it is called, the *faith* of the reformers, let him turn his eye to the church of Rome on the one hand, and to sectaries on the other, and attend to the consequences of these measures among both. Catholics laugh at protestant arguments against the infallibility of the bishop of Rome. See, say they, *mutant clypeos*, the reformed have destroyed one pope to create an hundred. Calvin is infallible at Geneva, Luther in Germany, in England Cranmer, and in Scotland Knox! How wise the doctrine of infallibility! how just and necessary the practice of the inquisition! the pretended protestants have tried in vain to govern churches without severity; they themselves, who have exclaimed the most violently against it, have been obliged to adopt it. Sectaries, on the other hand, avail themselves of these practices, and not distinguishing between christianity itself and the professors of it, charge that on the laws of our prince, which is chargeable only on the inadvertency of his subjects.

Other times, other manners! Whether the reproaches of the papists, the increase of learning, piety, and experience, or whatever else have meliorated the reformed churches, the French protestants rarely persecute, and when they do, it is plain they do that as a body in a synod, which not one of them would dare to avow as a private divine. Dangerous distinction! Should an upright man vote for a measure, which he would blush to enforce? Should he not endeavour to abrogate canons, which for the soul of him he has not impiety enough to execute? Shall protestants renounce that *merchandise* of Rome, which consists of *odours, and ointments, and chariots, and purple, and silk, and scarlet*, and continue that more scandalous traffic which consists of *slaves, and souls of men*? Rev. xviii. 12, 13.

If a counsel, or a work, be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, Acts v. 38, 39. is one of the surest axioms in the world, and if there be such a thing in the world as dignity, that is, propriety of character, it must be in that christian, who disdaining every carnal weapon, maintains the truth of his religion by placid reasoning, and by a holy life. Other influence is unscriptural, and unnatural too. We may admire the genius of a deist, avail ourselves of his learning, and lament his abuse of both: but we may not touch his person, his property, his liberty, his character, his peace. *To his own master he standeth or falleth*, Rom. xiv. 4.

We

We beg leave to subjoin three observations in regard to deism. Deists are not so numerous as some have imagined. Real christians have occasioned violent prejudices against christianity. Very few deists have taken up the argument on its true grounds; and they who have, could not support it.

Deists are not so numerous as some have imagined. Mons. de Voltaire has thought proper to inform his countrymen, in his *Additions* to his *General History*, that "Deism, "which Charles II. seemed openly to profess, became the "reigning religion" in England: that "the sect is become "very numerous;" and that "a number of eminent writers "have made open profession of deism." How this agreeable French writer came to know this, who can tell, if, as he affirms a little lower, "Deists allow a diversity of opinions "in others, and seldom discover their own;" and if "deists "have only a private form of worship, each worshipping "God in his own house, and assisting without scruple at all "public ceremonies?" Surely Mons. Voltaire mistook, he meant to describe a hypocrite, and not a deist.

If a deist be one, who having examined the religion of nature, and the religion of scripture, gives the preference to the former, and rejects the latter, it may be affirmed, I think that the number of deists is very small. In a comparative view, the number is too inconsiderable to be mentioned. The rank of a Herbert, the wit of a Shaftesbury, the style of a Bolingbroke, the scurrilous buffoonery of a Woolston, along with the wisdom and piety of the Lockes, and Lelands, and Lardners, who have opposed them, have given a name to deism: but the number of its professors is trifling, and of no account. If Mons. de Voltaire meant to relate an historical fact, he ought to have enumerated the *numerous professors* of christianity, and the *eminent writers* in defence of it, and the numerous professors of deism would have diminished and disappeared. If he meant to give a sanction to deism on account of its numerous defenders, he is a fresh example of that weakness to which great philosophers are sometimes subject, the weakness of sacrificing a sound logic to a silly prejudice.

Two sorts of people are fond of multiplying deists; bigots, and deists themselves. Deists take the liberty of associating with themselves Confuscius, Zoroaster, Socrates, and all the ancient philosophers. They first suppose that these philosophers would have rejected revelation, had it been

been proposed to them, and then they speak of them as if they had actually rejected it. But, if the gospel be not a system of absurdity, adapted to credulity, the probability is greater that they would have received, than that they would have rejected it; and if, as Lord Bolingbroke says, "it "must be admitted, that Plato insinuates in many places the "want, or the necessity of a divine revelation, to discover "the external service God requires, and the expiation "for sin, and to give stronger assurances of the rewards and "punishments, that await men in another world;" it becomes highly probable, that Plato would have embraced the christian revelation; and were the testimony of Jesus Christ admissible, it is absolutely certain that, *if the mighty works, which were done in* Judea, *had been done* among the heathens, many heathens *would have repented* of paganism *in sackcloth and ashes*, Matt. xi. 21, &c. To the army of philosophers they add all those christians, who do not understand, or who do not practise, the dictates of christianity With this hypothetical reasoning they attack christianity and boast of numbers, while all their votaries are *so few that a child may write them. Bigots*, who make scripture, and their sense of it, the same thing, practise the same pious fraud, and turn over all those to the deistical party, who do not allow their doctrines. Hence the popular notion of the multiplicity of deists.

From the charge of deism, first, the *populace* ought to be freed. Too many of them live without any religion. The religion of nature is as unknown to them as the religion of scripture. When they think of religion, their error is credulity, and their spiritual guides soon find, that the believing of too much, and not the believing of too little, is their mistake. They are wicked: but they are not deists; for the term deism, surely, stands for admitting the religion of nature, as well as for the renouncing of revelation. But of both, in general, they are alike ignorant.

They, who renounce popular doctrines, are not therefore deists. The learned and pious Dr. Bekker, one of the pastors at Amsterdam, renounced the popular opinion of the power of the devil, and published a book against it, in 1691. He seemed to doubt also of the eternity of hell torments. He was reputed a deist, and the consistory, the classes, and the synods proceeded against him, suspended him first from the communion, and deposed him at last from the office of a minister. Yet Dr. Bekker was a fast friend of revelation, and all his crime lay in expounding some literal passages of revelation

lation allegorically. Not the book: but the received meaning of it he denied,

The deists ought not to claim *them, who affirm, that it is not the property of the truths of revelation to square with philosophy.* Mons. Voltaire takes Pomponatius for a deist. Pomponatius denied the *natural* immortality of the soul; he affirmed, that it could not be proved by principles of philosophy: but he believed, and maintained, the immortality of the soul on the testimony of revelation. This learned Italian philosopher was persecuted by the monks; his book, it is said, was burnt by the Venetians; and the modern deists have adopted him: yet Pomponatius was a believer of revelation, and, by believing the immortality of the soul on the testimony of scripture, he discovered the most profound veneration for it, a deference exactly similar to that, which trinitarians pay to its testimony concerning the nature of God.

What Pomponatius affirmed of the immortality of the soul, Bayle affirmed of *all the mysteries* of the gospel: but, we do not allow, that Bayle was therefore a deist. Thus he writes: "If one of the apostles, St. Paul for instance, when "among the Athenians, had besought the Areopagus to per- "mit him to enter the lists against all philosophers; had he "offered to maintain a disputation upon the three persons, "who are but one God; and if, before he began the disputa- "tion, he had acknowledged the truth of rules laid down by "Aristotle in his logic, whether with regard to the terms of "opposition, or the characteristics of the premises of a demon- "strative syllogism, &c. lastly, if, after these preliminaries "were well settled, he had answered, that our reason is too "weak to ascend to the knowledge of the mysteries, in op- "position to which objections were proposed to him; in "such a case, he would have suffered as much shame, as it "is possible for a defeated opponent to meet with. The "Athenian philosophers must have gained a complete vic- "tory; for he would have been judged and condemned "agreeably to the maxims, the truth of which he had ac- "knowledged before. But had the philosophers employed "those maxims in attacking him, after he had informed "them of the foundation of his faith, he might have op- "posed the following barrier to them; that his doctrines "were not within the cognizance of reason; that they had "been revealed by heaven; and that mankind must believe "them, though they could not comprehend them. The

"disputation,

" disputation, in order for its being carried on in a regular " manner, must not have turned upon the following ques- " tion, whether these doctrines were repugnant to the rules " of logic and metaphysics: but on the question, whether " they had been revealed by heaven. It would have been " impossible for St. Paul to have been defeated, except it " could have been proved to him, that God did not require " those things to be believed*." This reasoning does not appear to favour deism; it seems to place *the mysteries* of christianity on their true base.

Neither are *those* to be reputed deists, *who doubt, or deny, the inspiration of some books, which are usually accounted sacred.* Luther denied the inspiration of the epistle of St. James; Grotius that of the Song of Solomon; and Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, denied that the Apocalypse was written by the Apostle John; yet no one of these was a deist.

Nor ought the deist to claim those learned *critics*, who allow that the scriptures have undergone the fate of all other books, and who therefore expose and amend the errors of copyists; expunge interpolations; restore mutilated passages; and deal with the writings of St. Paul, as they do with the writings of Thucydides. The chronology, the geography, the history, the learning of the bible, (if the expression be not improper) must necessarily submit to a critical investigation, and upright critics have self-evident rules of trial. The most severe piece of criticism on revelation is at the same time one of the most excellent defences of it. One single rule, had it been worthy of that attention, which it merits, would have spared the writing of many a folio, and have freed some christians from many a religious reverie†. Yet the author of this piece of criticism, the great Le Clerc, has been by some of his bigotted countrymen accounted a deist.

Finally, we cannot resign *those* brightest ornaments of the christian church, whose sense and grace will not allow them to be dogmatical, and *who hesitate about some doctrines generally received by their own communities.* The

 celebrated

* Gen. Dict. vol. x. Illustration upon the Manichees.

† Mons. Le Clerc expresses this rule thus; *Multa videri in versionibus emphatica, quæ in ipsis fontibus nullam emphasin habent.* Ars Crit. tom. i. p. 2. s. i. c. 4. This rule of interpretation, which regards the *idiom* of a language, deserves more attention, it should seem, than hath been usually paid to it.

celebrated Philip Melancthon has been taxed with scepticism: but far be the imputation from him! "He was one of the "wisest and best men of his age, (says a certain histo- "rian) he was of a sweet peaceful disposition, had a great "deal of wit, had read much, and his knowledge was very "extensive. The combination of such qualities natural and "acquired is ordinarily a foundation for diffidence. Me- "lancthon was by no means free from doubts, and there were "abundance of subjects, upon which he durst not pronounce "*this is so, and it cannot be otherwise.* He lived among "a sect of people, who to him appeared passionate, and too "eager to mix the arts of human policy, and the authority "of the secular arm, with the affairs of the church. His ten- "der conscience made him afraid that this might be a mark "of reprobation. Although he drew up the Augsburg con- "fession, yet he hated disputes in religion, and when his "mother asked him how she should conduct her belief amidst "so many controversies, Continue, answered he, to believe "and pray as you have hitherto done, and let these wars of "controversy give you no manner of trouble." This is the Melancthon who was suspected of deism!

Several more classes might be added to these: but these are sufficient to prove that real deists are not by far so numerous as reputed ones. The cause of deism unsupported by reason may magnify its little all: but the cause of revelation has little to fear from the learning, less from the morality, and nothing from the number of its opponents.

When some atheists appeared in the Jewish church, and attacked the knowledge and worship of God, the people of God were intimidated: but, the royal Psalmist justly observes, *they were in great fear, where no fear was,* Psal. liii. 5. Similar events have produced similar fears in the christian church, and to these honest, but ignorant fears we ascribe the much greater part of those pious frauds, with which christians have disgraced the cause of God. Most of the fathers, most of the church of Rome, and some protestant churches, have treated christianity like an old crazy palace, which requires props or supporters on every side; and they have manifested great injudiciousness in the choice of supporters. The gospel stands like a stately sturdy oak, defying the attack of every storm: but they, who had pitched their tent beneath its shade, heard a rustling among the leaves, trembled for the fate of the tree, and to secure it, surrounded it with a plantation of oziers. To this ignorant timidity,

midity, and not to the base tricks of knavery, the sordid arts of a sorry avarice, or the barbarous pleasure of shedding human blood, we charitably attribute the greatest absurdities in the christian church.

These absurdities, however, have produced very bad effects, and they oblige us to own, that *real christians have occasioned violent prejudices against christianity.*

Some christians have endeavoured to support the cause of christianity by spurious books; some by juggling tricks, called miracles; some by the imposition of superstitious ceremonies; some by the propagation of absurd doctrines; some have pretended to explain it by a wretched philosophy; others have exposed it to derision under pretence of adorning it with allegory: some have pleaded for it by fines, and fires, and swords; others have incorporated it with civil interests; most have laid down false canons of interpretation, and have resembled that synod, which condemned the afore-mentioned Dr. Bekker, because he "*had explained the holy scriptures* "*so as to make them contrary to the* CATECHISM, *and* "*particularly to* THE ARTICLES OF FAITH, *which he had* "*himself subscribed*" Above all, the loose lives of the professors of christianity, and particularly of some of the ministers of it, have *covered the daughter of Sion with a cloud, and have cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel*, Lam. ii. 1.

Involve christianity in all these thick mists, surround it with all these phœnomena, call a weak eye, or a wicked heart, to contemplate it, and, without a spirit of prophecy, the discovery may be foretold: the observer will become a reasoner . . . a philosopher . . . a DEIST.

These are the topics, and not the gospel itself, which most deists have attacked: but if we agree to exonerate christianity of all these incumbrances; what have deists to answer? *Very few* of them *have taken up the argument on its true grounds, and they, who have, could not support it.*

When a Frenchman undertakes to attack christianity, the disputes of his countrymen afford him an ample supply; he borrows arms of every party of christians, he conquers popery with protestant weapons, opposes the visions of quietism with the subtleties of Jansenism, the mysteries of Jansenius with the laws of good sense, and, having defeated absurdity, he vainly imagines, he has obtained a victory over christianity. English deists have taken the same method, and, as

our

our country has the same excesses, they have an ample field of glory before them. Christianity has nothing to do with the errors of St. Austin, or the dreams of Madam Bourignon: but it is founded on a few facts, the evidence of which can never be disproved. The knowledge of these is a preservative against deism.

To establish these facts was the original design of Mons. Saurin in the following sermons, as it is mine in endeavouring to translate them. Those, who are acquainted with his sermons, well know, that there are in the twelve volumes many more on the same topics: but, as it was impossible to put them all into one volume, I have been obliged to make the best choice in my power, and have arranged them in the following order.

The first sermon contains a set of rules essentially necessary to the investigating of *truth*, and a few reasons to enforce the practice of them. The second proposeth an examination of *the truths of christianity*, and settles rules of disputation peculiar to this controversy. The *facts* follow in the succeeding sermons, the birth, the ministry, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, &c. Four of the last discourses *expose infidelity* and *recommend christianity*; and the last of all is *an exhortation* to him, who is supposed to have found the gospel of Christ, *to hold it fast*, as a system of truth, and to avoid those snares, into which christians are liable to be drawn.

May our readers *have these things always in remembrance; for we have not followed cunningly devised fables*, 2 Pet. i. 15, &c. but a *sure word of prophecy*, history, and precept, which *holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the holy Ghost.*

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SERMON I.

THE PRICE OF TRUTH.

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Buy the truth.

WHAT is truth? John xviii. 38. This question Pilate formerly put to Jesus Christ, and there are two things, my brethren, in the scripture account of this circumstance very surprizing. It seems strange that Jesus Christ should not answer Pilate's question; and it seems equally strange that Pilate should not repeat the question till he procured an answer from Jesus Christ. One principal design of the Son of God in becoming incarnate, was to dissipate the clouds with which the enemy of mankind had obscured the *truth*; to free it from the numberless errors, with which the spirit of falshood had adulterated it among the miserable posterity of Adam; and to make the fluctuating conjectures of reason subside to the demonstrative evidence of revelation. Jesus Christ himself had just before said, *to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth*, ver. 37. yet here is a man lying in the dismal night of paganism; a man born in *darkness, having no hope, and* being *without God in the world*, Eph. v. 8. and ii. 12. here is a man, who from the bottom of that abyss in which he lies, implores the rays of that *light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*, John i. 9. and asks Jesus Christ, *What is truth?* And Jesus Christ refuseth to assist his enquiry, he doth not even condescend to answer this wise and interesting question. Is not this very astonishing? Is not this a kind of miracle?

But if Jesus Christ's silence be surprizing, is it not equally astonishing that Pilate should not repeat the question, and

endeavour to persuade Jesus Christ to give him an answer. A man who had discovered the true grounds of the hatred of the Jews; a man who knew that the virtues of the illustrious convict had occasioned their accusations against him; a man who could not be ignorant of the fame of his miracles; a man who was obliged, as it were, to become the apologist of the supposed culprit before him, and to use this plea, *I find in him no fault at all*, which condemned the pleader, while it justified him for whose sake the plea was made; this man only glances at an opportunity of knowing the *truth*. He asks, *What is truth?* But it does not much signify to him, whether Jesus Christ answer the question or not. Is not this very astonishing? Is not this also a kind of miracle?

My brethren, one of these wonders is the cause of the other, and if you consider them in connection, your astonishment will cease. On the one hand, Jesus Christ did not answer Pilate's question, because he saw plainly, that his iniquitous judge had not such an ardent love of *truth*, such a spitit of disinterestedness and vehement zeal as truth deserved. On the other, Pilate, who perhaps might have liked well enough to have known *truth*, if a simple wish could have obtained it, gave up the desire at the first silence of Jesus Christ. He did not thiuk truth deserved to be inquired after twice.

The conduct of Jesus Christ to Pilate, and the conduct of Pilate to Jesus Christ, is repeated every day. Our assiduity at church, our attention to the voice of the servants of God, our attachment to the sacred books in which *truth* is deposited; all these dispositions, and all these steps in our conduct, are, in a manner, so many repetitions of Pilate's question, *What is truth? What is* moral *truth? What is* the doctrinal *truth* of a future state, of judgment, of heaven, of hell? But how often, content with the putting of these questions, do we refuse the assiduous application of mind, that close attention of thought, which the answers to our questions would require? How often are we in pain, lest the light of the truth, that is shining around us, should force us to discover some objects, of which we choose to be ignorant. Jesus Christ, therefore, often leaves us to wander in our own miserable dark conjectures. Hence so many prejudices, hence so many erroneous opinions of religion and morality, hence so many dangerous delusions, which we cherish, even while they divert our attention from the great

great end to which we ought to direct all our thoughts, designs, and views.

I would fain shew you the road to truth to-day, my brethren; open to you the path that leads to it; and by motives taken from the grand advantages that attend the knowledge of it, animate you to walk in it.

I. We will examine what it costs to know *truth*.
II. What *truth* is worth.

Our text is *buy the truth*, and the title of our sermon shall be, the christian's logic. Doubtless, the greatest design that an immortal mind can revolve, is that of knowing *truth* ones self; and the design, which is next to the former in importance, and which surpasseth it in difficulty, is that of imparting it to others. But if a love of *truth*, if a desire of imparting it to a people, whom I bear always on my heart; if ardent prayers to the God of *truth*; if these dispositions can obtain the knowledge of truth, and the power of imparting it, we may venture to hope that we shall not preach in vain. May God himself crown our hopes with success!

I. We are to inquire for the road that leads to *truth*; or, to use the ideas of our text, we are to tell you what it costs to know *truth*.

Before we enter on this enquiry, it is necessary to determine what we mean by *truth*. If there be an equivocal word in the world, either in regard to human sciences, or in regard to religion, it is this word *truth*. But, not to enter into a metaphysical dissertation on the different ideas that are affixed to the term, we will content ourselves with indicating the ideas which we affix to it here.

Truth ought not to be considered here as subsisting in a subject, independently on the reflections of an intelligence that considers it. I do not affirm that there is not a *truth* in every object which subsists, whether we attend to it or not: but I say, that in these phrases, *to search truth*, *to love truth*, *to buy truth*, the term is relative, and expresseth a harmony between the object and the mind that considers it, a conformity between the object and the idea we have of it. *To search after truth*, is to endeavour to obtain adequate ideas of the object of our reflections; and *to buy truth*, is to make all the sacrifices, which are necessary for the ob-

taining of such ideas as are proportional to the objects, of which our notions are the images. By *truth*, then, we mean an agreement between an object and our idea of it.

But we may extend our meditation a little further. The term *truth*, taken in the sense we have now given it, is one of those abstract terms, the precise meaning of which can never be ascertained, without determining the object to which it is attributed. There is a *truth* in every art and science. There is a *truth* in the art of rising in the world; a certain choice of means, a certain dexterous application of circumstances; a certain promptitude at seizing an opportunity. The courtier *buys* this *truth*, by his assiduity at court, by his continual attention to the looks, the features, the gestures, the will, the whimsies, of his prince. The merchant *buys* this *truth* at the expence of his rest and his health; sometimes at the expence of his life, and often at that of his conscience and his salvation. In like manner, there is a *truth* in the sciences. A mathematician racks his invention, spends whole nights and days, suspends the most lawful pleasures, and the most natural inclinations to find the solution of a problem in a relation of figures, in a combination of numbers. These are not the *truths* which the wise man exhorts us to *buy*. They have their value, I own; but how seldom are they worth what they cost to obtain?

What then is Solomon's idea? Doth he mean only the *truths* of religion, and the science of salvation? There, certainly, that which is *truth* by excellence, may be found; nor can it be *bought* too dear. I do not think, however, that it would comprehend the precise meaning of the wise man to understand by *truth* here the science of salvation alone. His expression is vague, it comprehends all *truths*, it offers to the mind a general idea, the idea of universal *truth*. *Buy the truth.*

But what is this general idea of *truth?* What is *universal truth?* Does Solomon mean, that we should aim to obtain adequate ideas of all beings, that we should try to acquire the perfection of all arts, that we should comprehend the mysteries of all sciences? Who is equal to this undertaking?

It seems to me, my brethren, that when he exhorts us here to *buy the truth*, in this vague and indeterminate sense, he means to excite us to endeavour to acquire that happy disposition of mind, which makes us give to every question, that is proposed to us, the time and attention which it deserves; to each proof its evidence; to each difficulty its weight;

weight; to every good its real value. He means to inspire us with that accuracy of discernment, that equity of judgment, which would enable us to consider a demonstration as demonstrative, and a probability as probable only, what is worthy of a great application as worthy of a great application, what deserves only a moderate love as worthy of only a moderate love, and what deserves an infinite esteem as worthy of an infinite esteem; and so on This, I think, my brethren, is the disposition of mind, with which Solomon means to inspire us. This, if I may be allowed to say so, is an aptness to *universal truth*. With this disposition, we may go as far in the attainment of particular *truths*, as the measure of the talents, which we have received of God, and the various circumstances, in which Providence hath placed us, will allow. Especially, by this disposition, we shall be convinced of this principle, to which Solomon's grand design was to conduct us; that the science of salvation is that, which, of all others, deserves the greatest application of our minds and hearts; and with this disposition we shall make immense advances in the science of salvation.

But neither this *universal truth*, nor the disposition of mind, which conducts us to it, can be acquired without labour and sacrifice. They must be bought. *Buy the truth.* And, to confine myself to some distinct ideas, *universal truth*, or the disposition of mind, which leads to it, requires the sacrifice of *dissipation*; the sacrifice of *indolence*; the sacrifice of *precipitancy* of judgment; the sacrifice of *prejudice*; the sacrifice of *obstinacy*; the sacrifice of *curiosity*; the sacrifice of the *passions*. We comprise the matter in seven precepts.

1. Be attentive.
2. Do not be discouraged at labour.
3. Suspend your judgment.
4. Let prejudice yield to reason.
5. Be teachable.
6. Restrain your avidity of knowing.
7. In order to edify your mind, subdue your heart.

This is the price, at which God hath put up this universal *truth*, and the disposition that leads to it. If you cannot resolve on making all these sacrifices, you may, perhaps, arrive at some particular truth; but you can never obtain universal truth. You may, perhaps, become famous mathematicians, or geometers, judicious critics, or celebrated officers; but you can never become real disciples of *truth*.

1. The

1. The sacrifice of dissipation is the first price we must pay for the *truth*. *Be attentive* is the first precept, which we must obey, if we would know it. A modern philosopher* has carried, I think, this precept too far. He pretends that the mind of man is united to two very different beings; first to the portion of matter, which constitues his body, and next, to God, to eternal wisdom, to universal reason. He pretends, that, as the emotions, which are excited in our brain, are the cause of our sentiments, effects of the union of the soul to the body; so attention is the occasional cause of our knowledge, and of our ideas, effects of the union of our mind to God, to eternal wisdom, to universal reason. The system of this philosopher on this subject hath been long since denominated a philosophical romance. It includes, however, the necessity, and the advantage, of attention, which is of the last importance. Dissipation is a turn of mind, which makes us divide our mind among various objects, at a time when we ought to fix it wholly on one. Attention is the opposite disposition, which collects, and fixes our ideas on one object. Two reflections will be sufficient to prove that *truth* is unattainable without the sacrifice of dissipation, and the application of a close attention.

The first reflection is taken from the *nature* of the human mind, which is finite, and contracted within a narrow sphere. We have only a portion of genius. If, while we are examining a compound proposition, we do not proportion our attention to the extent of the proposition, we shall see it only in part, and we shall fall into error. The most absurd propositions have some motives of credibility. If we consider only two motives of credibility in a subject, which hath two degrees of probability, and if we consider three degrees of probability in a subject, which hath only four, this last will appear more credible to us than the first.

The second reflection is taken from *experience*. Every one, who hath made the trial, knows, that things have appeared to him true or false, probable or certain, according to the dissipation which divided, or the attention which fixed, his mind in the examination. Whence is it, that on certain days of retirement, recollection, and meditation, piety seems to be the only object worthy of our attachment, and, with a mind fully convinced, we say, *My portion, O Lord, is to keep thy words?* Psal. cxix. 57. Whence is it, that, in hearing

* Malbranche, in his search after truth. Book III. chap. 6.

hearing a sermon, in which the address of the preacher forceth our attention, in a manner, in spite of ourselves, we exclaim, as Israel of old did, *All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do?* Exod. xix. 8. Whence is it, that, on a death-bed, we freely acknowledge the solidity of the instructions that have been given us on the emptiness of worldly possessions, and readily join our voices to all those that cry, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, and vexation of spirit?* Eccles. i. 2. Whence is it, on the contrary, that in the gaiety of youth, and in the vigour of health, the same objects appear to us substantial and solid, which seem void and vexatious when we come to die? How comes it to pass, that a commerce with the world subverts all the systems of piety, which we form in our closets? How is it, that demonstrations expire when sermons end, and that all we have felt in the church ceaseth to affect us when we go out of the gate? Is there, then, nothing sure in the nature of beings? Is *truth* nothing but an *exterior denomination*, as the schools term it, nothing but a creature of reason, a manner of conceiving? Doth our mind change its nature, as circumstances change the appearance of things? Doth that, which was true in our closets, in our churches, in a calm of our passions, become false when the passions are excited, when the church doors are shut, and the world appears? God forbid! It is because, in the first circumstances, we are all taken up with studying the *truth;* whereas health, the world, the passions, disperse, (so to speak,) our attention, and, by dissipating, weaken it.

I add further, Dissipation is one ordinary source, not only of errors in judgment, but also of criminal actions in practice. We declaim, perhaps, too much against the malice of mankind. Perhaps men may not be so wicked as we imagine. When we can obtain their attention to certain *truths*, we find them affected with them; we find their hearts accessible to motives of equity, gratitude, and love. If men seem averse to these virtues, it is sometimes their attention is divided among them; it is because they are taken up with a circle of temporal objects; it is because the hurry of the world incessantly deafens them. Ignorance and error are inseparable from dissipation. Be *attentive*, then, is the first precept we give you. The sacrifice of dissipation, then, is necessary, in order to our arrival at the knowledge of *truth*.

But, if truth can be obtained only by observing this precept, and by making this sacrifice, let us ingenuously own,

truth

truth is put up at a price, and at a great price. The expression of the wise man is just, the truth must be bought. *Buy the truth.* Our minds, averse from recollection and attention, love to rove from object to object, they particularly avoid those objects which are intellectual, and which have nothing to engage the senses, of which kind are the truths of religion. The majesty of an invisible God *who hideth himself*, cannot captivate them; and as they are usually employed about earthly things, so terrestrial ideas generally involve them. Satan, who knows that a believer, studious of the truth, is the most formidable enemy to his empire, strives to divert him from it. As soon as Abraham prepares his offering, the birds of prey interrupt his sacrifice: a disciple of *truth* drives such birds away. Among various objects, amidst numerous dissipations, in spite of opposite ideas, which resist and combat one another, he gathers up his attention and unreservedly turns his soul to the study of *truth*.

2. The second sacrifice is that of indolence, or slothfulness of mind; and *Be not discouraged at labour* is the second precept, which must be observed, if you would obtain the knowledge of *truth*. This article is connected with the preceding. The sacrifice of dissipation, cannot be made without making this of indolence, or sluggishness of mind. Attention is labour; it is even one of the most painful labours. The labour of the mind is often more painful than that of the body; and the greatest part of mankind have less aversion to the greatest fatigues of the body, than to the least application of mind. The military life seems the most laborious; yet, what an innumerable multitude of men prefer it before the study of the sciences! This is the reason, the study of the sciences requires a contention, which costs our indolence more than the military life would cost it.

Although the labour of the mind is painful, yet it is surmountable, and it is formed in the same manner in which fatigue of body is rendered tolerable. A man, who is accustomed to ease and rest, a man, who hath been delicately brought up, cannot bear to pass days and nights on horseback, to have no settled abode, to be continually in action, to waste away by the heat of the day, and the inclemency of the night. Nothing but use and exercise can harden a man to these fatigues. In like manner, a man, who hath been accustomed to pass his days and nights on horseback, to have no settled abode, to be continually in action, to wear himself

self out with the heat of the day, and the cold of the night; a man whose body seems to have changed its nature, and to have contracted the hardness of iron, or stone; such a man cannot bear the fatigue of attention. It is then necessary to accustom the mind to labour, to inure it to exercise, to render it apt, by habit and practice, to make those efforts of attention, which elevate those, who are capable of them, to ideas the most sublime, and to mysteries the most abstruse.

They, whom Providence calls to exercise mechanical arts, have reason to complain; for every thing, that is necessary to discharge the duties of their calling, diverts their attention from what we are now recommending, and absorbs their minds in sensible and material objects. God, however, will exercise his equitable mercy towards them, and their cases afford us a presumptive proof of that admirable diversity of judgment, which God will observe at the last day. He will make a perfect distribution of the various circumstances of mankind; and *to whom he hath committed much, of him he will ask the more*, Luke xii. 48.

Let no one abuse this doctrine. Every mechanic is engaged, to a certain degree, to sacrifice indolence and dulness of mind. Every mechanic hath an immortal soul. Every mechanic ought to *buy the truth* by labour and attention. Let every one of you, then, make conscience of devoting a part of his time to recollection and meditation. Let each, amidst the meanest occupations, accustom himself to think of a future state. Let each endeavour to surmount the reluctance, which, alas! we all have to the study of abstract subjects. *Be not disheartened at your labour*, is our second precept. The sacrifice of indolence and sluggishness of mind is the second sacrifice, which *truth* demands.

3. It requires, in the next place, that we should sacrifice precipitancy of judgment. Few people are capable of this sacrifice: indeed, there are but few, who do not consider *suspension of judgment* as a weakness, although it is one of the noblest efforts of genius and capacity. In regard to human sciences, it is thought a disgrace, to say, I cannot determine such, or such a question. The decision of it would require so many years study and examination. I have been but so many years in the world, and I have spent a part in the study of this science, a part in the pursuit of that; one part in this domestic employment, and another in that. It is absurd to suppose that I have been able to examine all the

principles, and all the consequences, all the calculations, all the proofs, and all the difficulties, on which the ecclaircissement of this question depends. Wisdom requires, that my mind should remain undetermined on this question, that I should neither affirm, nor deny, any thing of a subject, the evidences, and the difficulties, of which are alike unknown to me.

In regard to religion, people usually make a scruple of conscience of suspending their judgments: yet, in our opinion, a christian is so much the more obliged to do this, by how much more the *truths* of the gospel surpass in sublimity and importance all the objects of human science. I forgive this folly in a man educated in superstition, who is threatened with eternal damnation, if he renounce certain doctrines, which not only he hath not examined, but which he is forbidden to examine under the same penalty. But that casuists, who are, or who ought to be, men of learning and piety, should imagine they have obtained a signal victory over infidelity, and have accredited religion, when, by the help of some terrific declamations, they have extorted a catechumen's consent; this is what we could have scarcely believed had we not seen numberless examples of it. And that you, my brethren, who are a free people, you who are *spiritual* men, and ought to *judge all things*, 1 Cor. ii. 15. that you should at any time submit to such casuists; this is what we could have hardly credited, had not experience afforded us too many mortifying proofs.

Let us not incorporate our fancies with religion. The belief of a *truth*, without evidence, can render us no more agreeable to God than the belief of a falshood. A *truth*, received without proof, is, in regard to us, a kind of falshood. Yea, a *truth*, received without evidence, is a never failing source of many errors; because a *truth*, received without evidence, is founded, in regard to us, only on false principles. And, if, by a kind of hazard, in which reason hath no part, a false principle engage us to receive a *truth* on this occasion, the same principle will engage us to receive an error on another occasion. We must then suspend our judgments, whatever inclination we may naturally have to determine at once, in order to save the attention and labour, which a more ample discussion of *truth* would require. By this mean, we shall not attain, indeed, all knowledge: but we shall prevent all errors. The goodness of God doth not propose to enable us to know all truth: but it proposeth to

give

give us all needful help to escape error. It is conformable to his goodness, that we should not be obliged, by a necessity of nature, to consent to error; and the help needful for the avoiding of falshood he hath given us. Every man is entirely free to withhold his consent from a subject which he hath not considered in every point of view.

4. The fourth sacrifice, which *truth* demands, is that of prejudice; and the fourth precept is this, *Let prejudice yield to reason.* This precept needs explanation. The term *prejudice* is equivocal. Sometimes it is employed to signify a proof, which hath not a full evidence, but which, however, hath some weight: so that a great number of prejudices, which, taken separately, could not form a demonstration, taken together ought to obtain an assent. But, sometimes the word *prejudice* hath an odious meaning, it is put for that impression, which a circumstance, foreign from the proposition, makes on the mind of him, who is to determine, whether the proposition ought to be received or rejected. In this sense we use the word, when we say a man is full of *prejudice*, in order to describe that disposition, which makes him give that attention and authority to false reasonings, which are due only to solid arguments.

Our fourth precept is to be taken in a different sense, according to the different meaning, which is given to this term. If the word *prejudice* be taken in the first sense, when we require you to make prejudice yield to reason, we mean, that you should give that attention, and authority, to a presumption, or a probability, which presumptive or probable evidence requires. We mean, that demonstrative evidence should always prevail over appearances. The equity of this precept is self-evident; yet, perhaps, it may not be improper to shew the necessity of obeying it, in order to engage our conduct the more closely to it. I said just now, that men were enemies to that labour, which the finding out of *truth* requires. Yet men love knowledge. From the combination of these two dispositions ariseth their propensity to *prejudice.* A man, who yields to *prejudice*, frees himself from that labour, which a search after *truth* would require; and thus gratifies his indolence. He flatters himself he hath obtained *truth*, and so he satisfies his desire of knowledge. We must guard against this temptation. This is the first sense of the precept, Let prejudice yield to reason.

When, in the second sense, which we have given to the word *prejudice*, we require him, who would be a disciple of

truth, to make prejudice yield to reason, we mean, that whenever he examines a question, he should remove every thing that is not connected with it. *Prejudice*, in our first sense, sometimes conducts to *truth*: but *prejudice*, of the second kind, always leads us from it. What idea would you form of a man, who, in examining this question, *Is there a part of the world called America?* should place among the arguments, which determine him to affirm, or to deny the question, this consideration; *The sun shines to day in all its splendour*; or this, *The sun is concealed behind thick clouds?* Who does not see, that these middle terms, by which the disputant endeavours to decide the point, have no concern with the solution of the question? This example I use only for the sake of conveying my meaning, and I do not design by it to guard you against this particular error. None of you, in examining the question which we just now mentioned, hath ever regarded, either as proofs, or as objections, these considerations, *The sun shines to day in all its splendour*, *The sun is hidden to day behind the clouds*. However, it is too true, that in questions of far greater importance, we often determine our opinions by reasons, which are as foreign from the matter as those just now mentioned. For example, it is a question, either whether such a man be an accurate reasoner, or whether he express a matter clearly, or whether his evidence deserve to be received, or rejected. What can be more foreign from any of these questions, than the habit he wears, the number of servants that wait on him, the equipage he keeps, the tone, in which he reasons, the dogmatical air, with which he decides? And, yet, how often does a dogmatical decision, a peculiar tone, a pompous equipage, a numerous retinue, a certain habit, how often does each of these become a motive to mankind to receive the testimony of such a man, and to engage them to resign their reason to him? In like manner, a man may understand all history, ancient and modern, he may possess all the oriental languages, he may know the customs of the most remote and barbarous nations, and he may be, all the time, a bad logician: for what relation is there between the knowledge of customs, tongues, and histories, ancient and modern, and an accurate habit of reasoning? And, yet, how often does the idea of a man bustling with science of this kind impose on our minds? How often have we imagined that a man, who knew what the *soul* was called in thirty or forty different languages, knew its nature,

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its properties, and its duration, better than he who knew only what it was called in his own mother tongue? The term *prejudice*, (we repeat it again) which sometimes signifies a probability, is sometimes put for that impression, which a circumstance, foreign from the question under examination, makes on the mind. When we demand the sacrifice of *prejudice*, in this latter sense, we mean to induce you to avoid all motives of credibility, except those which have some relation, near, or remote, to the subject in hand.

This precept will appear more important to you, if you apply it to a particular subject. We will mention a famous example, that will prove the necessity of sacrificing prejudice, in both the senses we have mentioned. There is a case, in which the great number of those who adhere to a communion forms a prejudice in its favour. One communion is embraced by a multitude of scholars, philosophers, and fine geniusses: another communion hath but few partizans of these kinds: hence ariseth a probability, a presumption, a prejudice, in favour of the first, and against the last of these communities. It is probable that the community, which hath the greatest number of fine geniusses, philosophers, and scholars, is more rational than that which hath the least. However, this is only a probability, this is not a demonstration. The most elevated minds are capable of the greatest extravagances, as the highest saints are subject to the lowest falls. If you can demonstrate the truth of that religion which the multitude of great men condemn, the probability which ariseth from the multitude, ought to yield to demonstration. Sacrifice *prejudice* in this first sense.

But there is a case, in which a great number of partizans do not form even a probability in favour of the doctine they espouse. For example, the church of Rome perpetually urges the suffrage of the multitude in its favour; and we reply, that the multitude of those who adhere to the Roman church, does not form even a presumption in their favour, and we prove it.

If you affirm that a multitude forms a probability in favour of any doctrine, it must be supposed that this multitude have examined the doctrine which they profess, and profess only what they believe. But we must first object against that part of the multitude which the church of Rome boasts of, which is composed of indolent members, who continue in the profession of their ancestors by chance, as it were, and without knowing why. We must object next, against an infinite number

number of ignorant people in that community, who actually know nothing about the matter. We must object against whole provinces and kingdoms, where it is hardly known that there is a divine book, on which the faith of the church is founded. We must object against that army of ecclesiastics, who are not wiser than the common people, on account of their being distinguished from them by a particular habit, and who waste their lives in eternal idleness, at least in exercises which have no relation to an enquiry after *truth*. We must object further, against all those zealous defenders of the church, who are retained in it by the immense riches they possess there, who judge of the weight of an argument by the advantages which it procures them, and who actually reason thus: The church, in which the ministers are poor, is a bad church; that which enriches them is a good church: but this church enriches its ministers, and that suffers them to be poor; the latter, therefore, is a bad church, and the former is the only good one. We must object finally, against all those callous souls, *who hold the truth in unrighteousness*, Rom. i. 18. and who oppose it only in a party spirit. If you pursue this method, you will perceive, that the multitude which alarmed you, will be quickly diminished, and that this argument, so often repeated by the members of the church of Rome, doth not form even a probability in favour of that communion.

5. The fifth sacrifice, which *truth* demands, is that of obstinacy; and the fifth precept which you must obey, if you mean to attain it, is this: *Be teachable*. This maxim is self-evident. What can be more irrational than a disposition to defend a proposition, only because we have had the rashness to advance it, and to choose to heap up a number of absurdities rather than to relinquish one, which had escaped without reflection or design? What can be more absurd, than that disposition of mind, which makes us prefer falling a thousand times into falshood, before saying for once, I mistake? Had we not some knowledge of mankind, were we to form a system of morality on metaphysical ideas, it would seem needless to prescribe docility, and one would think every body would be naturally inclined to practise this virtue. But what seems useless in speculation is very often essential in practice. Let us guard against obstinacy. Let us always consider that the noblest victory, which we obtain over ourselves. Let each of us say, when *truth* requires it, I have erred, I consecrate the remainder of my life to publish

publish that *truth* which I have hitherto misunderstood, and which I opposed only because I had the misfortune to misunderstand it.

6. *Truth* requires the sacrifice of curiosity, and the sixth precept which is proposed to us, is, *Restrain your avidity of knowing*. This is a difficult sacrifice, the precept is even mortifying. Intelligence is one of the noblest prerogatives of man. The desire of knowledge is one of our most natural desires. We do not, thetefore, condemn it, as bad in itself: but we wish to convince you, that to give an indiscreet scope to it, instead of assisting in the attainment of *truth*, is to abandon the path that leads to it; and by aspiring to the knowledge of objects above our reach, and which would be useless to us during our abode in this world, and destructive of the end for which God hath placed us here, we neglect others which may be discovered, and which have a special relation to that end. We ought then to sacrifice curiosity, to refrain from an insatiable desire of knowing every thing, and to persuade ourselves, that some truths, which are often the objects of our speculations, are beyond the attainment of finite minds, and particularly of those finite minds, on which God hath imposed the necessity of studying other truths, and of practising other duties.

7. But of all the sacrifices which *truth* requires, that of the passions is the most indispensible. We have proved this on another occasion,* and we only mention it to-day.

Such are the sacrifices which *truth* requires of us; such are the precepts which we must practise to obtain it, and the explication of these may account for some sad phœnomena. Why are so many people deceived? Why do so many embrace the grossest errors? Why do so many people admit the most absurd propositions as if they were demonstrations? Why, in one word, are most men such bad reasoners? It is because rectitude of thought cannot be acquired without pains and labour; it is because *truth* is put up at a price; it is because it costs a good deal to attain it, and because few people value it so as to acquire it by making the sacrifices which, we have said, the truth demands.

II. Let us proceed to enquire the *worth* of truth, for however great the sacrifices may be which the attainment of *truth* requires, they bear no proportion to the advantages which

* Serm. Tom. II. Ser. neuvieme. *Sur les passions.*

which *truth* procures to its adherents. 1. *Truth* will open to you an infinite source of pleasure. 2. It will fit you for the various employments, to which you may be called in society. 3. It will free you from many disagreeable doubts about religion. 4. It will render you intrepid at the approach of death. The most rapid inspection of these four objects will be sufficient to convince you, that at whatever price God hath put up *truth*, you cannot purchase it too dearly. *Buy the truth.*

1. *Truth* will open to you an infinite source of pleasure. The pleasure of knowledge is infinitely superior to the pleasures of sense, and to those which are excited by the turbulent passions of the heart. If the knowledge of *truth* be exquisitely pleasing when human sciences are the objects of it, what delight is it not attended with, when the science of salvation is in view?

My brethren, forgive me if I say, the greater part of you are not capable of entering into these reflections. As you usually consider religion only in a vague and superficial manner; as you know neither the beauty, nor the importance of it; as you see it neither in its principles, nor in its consequences, so it is a pain to you to confine yourselves to the study of it. Reading tires you; meditation fatigues you; a sermon of an hour wearies you quite out; and judging of others by yourselves, you consider a man who employs himself silently in the closet to study religion, a man whose soul is in an extacy when he increaseth his knowledge, and refines his understanding; you consider him as a melancholy kind of man, whose brain is turned, and whose imagination is become wild, through some bodily disorder. To study, to learn, to discover; in your opinions, what pitiable pursuits! The elucidation of a period! The cause of a phœnomenon! The arrangement of a system! There is far more greatness of soul in the design of a courtier, who, after he hath languished many hours in the anti-chamber of a prince, at length obtains one glance of the prince's eye. There is much more solidity in the projects of a gamester, who proposes in an instant, to raise his fortune on the ruin of that of his neighbour. There is much more reality in the speculations of a merchant, who discovers the worth of this thing, and the value of that, who taxes, if I may be allowed to speak so, heaven, and earth, and sea, all nature, and each of its component parts.

But

But you deceive yourselves grossly. The study of religion, as we apply it to our closets, is very different from that, which you exercise under a sermon, sometimes not well preached, and often badly heard; and from that which you exercise in the hasty reading of a pious book. As we meditate, we learn, and as we learn, the desire of learning increaseth. In our studies, we consider religion in every point of light. There, we compare it with the dictates of conscience, with the desires of the human heart, and with the general concert of all creatures. There, we admire to see the God of nature in harmony with the God of religion; or rather, we see religion is the renovation and embellishment of nature. There, we compare author with author, œconomy with œconomy, prophecy with event, event with prophecy. There, we are delighted to find that, notwithstanding diversities of times, places, conditions, and characters, the sacred authors harmonize, and prove themselves animated by one Spirit: a promise made to Adam, is repeated to Abraham, confirmed by Moses, published by the prophets, and accomplished by Jesus Christ. There, we consider religion as an assemblage of truths, which afford one another a mutual support, and, when we make some new discovery, when we meet with some proof, of which we had been ignorant before, we are involved in pleasures, far more exquisite than those, which you derive from all your games, from all your amusements, from all the dissipations, which consume your lives. We enjoy a satisfaction in advancing in this delightful path, infinitely greater than that, which you taste, when your ambition, or your avarice, is gratified: we *look*, like the cherubims, to the mystical ark, and *desire* thoroughly to know all its contents, 1 Pet. i. 12.

A christian, who understands how to satiate his soul with these sublime objects, can always derive pleasure from its fountain. *If ye continue in my word*, said the Saviour of the world, *ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*, John viii. 31, 32. This saying is true in many respects, and perhaps it may, not improperly, be applied to our subject. A man, who hath no relish for *truth*, is a slave, leisure-time is a burden to him. He must crawl to every inferior creature, prostrate himself before it, and humbly intreat it to free him from that listlessness, which dissolves and destroys him; and he must by all means avoid the sight of himself, which would be intolerable to him. But a christian, who knows the *truth* and loves it, and who

endeavours to make daily advances in it, is delivered from this slavery: *The truth hath made him free.* In retirement, in his closet, yea, in a desert, his meditation supplies the place of the whole world, and of all its delights.

2. *Truth* will fit you for the employments to which you are called in society. Religion, and Solomon, the herald of it, had certainly a view more noble and sublime, than that of preparing us for the exercise of those arts, which employ us in the world. Yet, the advantages of *truth* are not confined to religion. A man, who hath cultivated his mind, will distinguish himself in every post, in which Providence may place him. An irrational, sophistical turn of mind incapacitates all, who do not endeavour to correct it. Rectitude of thought, and accuracy of reasoning, are necessary every where. How needful are they in a political conference? What can be more intolerable than the harangues of those senators, who, while they should be consulting measures for the relieving of public calamities, never understand the state of a question, nor even come nigh the subject of deliberation: but employ that time in vain declamations, foreign from the matter, which ought to be devoted to the discussion of a particular point, on which the fate of a kingdom depends? How needful is such a rectitude of thought in a council of war? What, pray, is a general destitute of this? He is an arm without a head: he is a madman, who may mow down ranks on his right hand, and cover the field with carnage on the left: but who will sink under the weight of his own valour, and, for want of discernment, will render his courage often a burden, and sometimes a ruin to his country. This article of my discourse addresseth itself principally to you, who are heads of families. It is natural to parents to wish to see their children attain the most eminent posts in society. If this desire be innocent, it will engage you to educate your children in a manner suitable to their destination. Cultivate their reason, regard that, as the most necessary science, which forms their judgments, and which renders their reasoning powers exact.

This is particularly necessary to those, whom God calls to officiate in the church. What can be more unworthy of a minister of *truth*, than a sophistical turn of mind? What more likely method to destroy religion than to establish *truth* on arguments, which would establish falshood? What can be more unreasonable than that kind of logic, which serves to reason with, if I may be allowed to speak so, only from hand

to

to mouth: which pulls down with the one hand what it builds with the other; which abandons, in disputing with adversaries of one kind, the principles, it had established, in disputing with adversaries of another kind? What sad effects does this method, too often practised by these, who ought to abhor it, produce in the church? Are we called to oppose teachers, who carry the free agency of man beyond its due bounds? Man is made a trunk, a stone, a being destitute of intelligence and will. Are we called to oppose people, who, under pretence of defending the perfections of God, carry the slavery of man beyond its due bounds? Man is made a seraphical intelligence; the properties of disembodied spirits are attributed to him, he is represented capable of elevating his meditations to the highest heavens, and of attaining the perfections of angels and cherubims. Are we called to oppose adversaries, who carry the doctrine of good works too far? The necessity of them is invalidated; they are said to be suited to the condition of a christian, but they are not made essential to christianity; the esssence of faith is made to consist in a bare desire of being saved, or, if you will, of being sanctified, a desire, into which enters, neither that knowledge of the heart, nor that denial of self, nor that mortification of the passions, without which every desire of being sanctified is nothing but an artifice of corruption, which turns over a work to God, that he hath imposed on man. Are we called to oppose people, who enervate the necessity of good works? The christian vocation is made to consist in impracticable exercises, in a degree of holiness inaccessible to frail men. The whole genius of religion, and of all its ordinances, is destroyed, the table of the Lord is surrounded with devils, and fires, and flames, and is represented rather as a tribunal where God exerciseth his vengeance, as a mount Ebal, from whence he crieth, *Cursed be the man, Cursed be the man,* than as a throne of grace, to which he inviteth penitent sinners, and imparteth to them all the riches of his love. Are we called to oppose men, who would make God the author of sin, and who, from the punishments, which he inflicts on sinners, derive consequences injurious to his goodness and mercy? All the reiterated declarations of scripture are carefully collected, all the tender expostulations, all the attracting invitations, which demonstrate that man is the author of his own destruction, and that *God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth,* 1 Tim. ii. 4. Are we called

to resist adversaries who weaken the empire of God over his creatures? God is made, I do not say an inexorable master, I do not say a severe king; but O horrid! he is made a tyrant, and worse than a tyrant. It has been seriously affirmed that he formed a great part of mankind with the barbarous design of punishing them for ever and ever; in order to have the cruel pleasure of shewing how far his avenging justice, and his flaming anger can go. It hath been affirmed, that the decree pronounced against the reprobate before his birth, not only determines him to punishment after the commission of sin; but infallibly inclines him to sin, because that is necessary to the manifestation of divine justice, and to the felicity of the elect, who will be much happier in heaven, if there be thousands and millions of miserable souls in the flames of hell, than if all mankind should enjoy the felicity of paradise.

Ah! my God! If any among us be capable of forming ideas so injurious to thy perfections, impute it not to the whole society of christians; and let not all our churches suffer for the irregularities of some of our members! One single altar prepared for idols, one single act of idolatry, was formerly sufficient to provoke thy displeasure. Jealous of thy glory, thou didst inflict on the republic of Israel thy most terrible chastisements, when they associated false gods with thee. Hence those dreadful calamities, hence those eternal banishments, hence heaven and earth employed to punish the guilty. But if Jews experienced such a rigorous treatment for attributing to false gods the perfections of the true God, what punishments will not you suffer, christians, if in spite of the light of the gospel, which shineth around you, you tax the true God with the vices of false gods: if by a theology unworthy of the name, you attribute to a holy God the cruelty, the injustice, and the falshood, of those idols to which corrupt passions alone gave a being, as well as attributes agreeable to their own abominable wishes? That disposition of mind which conducts to univeral *truth*, frees a man from these contradictions, and harmonizes the pastor, and the teacher with himself.

3. *Truth* will deliver you from disagreeable doubts about religion. The state of a mind, which is *carried about with every wind of doctrine*, Eph. iv. 14. to use an expression of St. Paul, is a violent state, and it is very disagreeable, in such interesting subjects as those of religion, to doubt whether one be in the path of *truth*, or in the road of error; whether

whether the worship that one renders to God, be acceptable or odious to him; whether the fatigues and sufferings that are endured for religion, be punishments of ones folly, or preparations for the reward of virtue.

But if this state of mind be violent, it is difficult to free ones self from it. There are but two sorts of men, who are free from the disquietudes of this state: they who live without reflection, and they who have seriously studied religion; they are the only people who are free from doubts.

We see almost an innumerable variety of sects, which are diametrically opposite to one another. How can we flatter ourselves that we belong to the right community, unless we have profoundly applied ourselves to distinguish *truth* from falshood?

We hear the partisans of these different religions anathematize and condemn one another. How is it, that we are not afraid of their denunciations of wrath?

We cannot doubt that, among them who embrace systems opposite to ours, there is a great number who have more knowledge, more erudition, more genius, more penetration, than we. How is it that we do not fear, that these adversaries, who have had better opportunities of knowing the *truth* than we, actually do know it better; and that they have employed more time to study it, and have made a greater progress in it?

We acknowledge, that there are in the religion we profess, difficulties which we are not able to solve, bottomless depths, mysteries, which are not only above our reason; but which seem opposite to it. How is it, that we are not stumbled at these difficulties? How is it, that we have no doubt of the truth of a religion, which is, in part, concealed under impenetrable veils?

We are obliged to own, that prejudices of birth and education, are usually very influential over our minds. Moreover, we ought to remember, that nothing was so carefully inculcated on our infant minds as the articles of our faith. How can we demonstrate that these articles belong to the class of demonstrative truths, and not to that of the prejudices of education?

We know, by sad experience, that we have often admitted erroneous propositions for incontestible principles; and that when we have thought ourselves in possession of demonstration, we have found ourselves hardly in possession of probability. How is it, that we do not distrust the judgments

ments of minds so subject to illusion, and which have been so often deceived?

From these different reflections ariseth a mixture of light and darkness, a contrast of certainty and doubt, infidelity and faith, scepticism and assurance, which makes one of the most dreadful states in which an intelligent soul can be. If men are not a constant prey to the gloomy thoughts that accompany this state, it is because sensual objects fill the whole capacity of their souls: but there are certain moments of reflection and self-examination, in which reason will adopt these distressing thoughts, and oblige us to suffer all their exquisite pain.

A man who is arrived at the knowledge of the *truth*, a man who hath made all the sacrifices necessary to arrive at it, is superior to these doubts: not only because *truth* hath certain characters which distinguish it from falshood, certain rays of light which strike the eye, and which it is impossible to mistake; but also because it is not possible that God should leave those men in capital errors, whom he hath enabled to make such grand sacrifices to *truth*. If he do not discover to them at first all that may seem fundamental in religion, he will communicate to them all that is fundamental in effect. He will bear with them, if they embrace some circumstantial errors, into which they fall only through a frailty inseparable from human nature.

4. Finally, consider the value of *truth* in regard to the calm which it produceth on a death-bed. *Truth* will render you intrepid at the sight of death. Cato of Utica, it is said, resolved to die, and not being able to survive the liberty of Rome, and the glory of Pompey, desired, above all things, to convince himself of the truth of a future state. Although he had meditated on this important subject throughout the whole course of his life, yet he thought it was necessary to re-examine it at the approach of death. For this purpose he withdrew from society, he sought a solitary retreat, he read Plato's book on the immortality of the soul, studied the proofs with attention, and convinced of this grand truth, in tranquillity he died. Methinks I hear him answering, persuaded of his immortality, all the reasonings that urge him to continue in life. If Cato had obtained only uncertain conjectures on the immortality of the soul, he would have died with regret; if Cato had known no other world, he would have discovered his weakness in quitting this. But Plato gave Cato satisfaction. Cato was persuaded of another life. The sword

sword with which he destroyed his natural life, could not touch his immortal soul. The soul of Cato saw another Rome, another republic, in which tyranny should be no more on the throne, in which Pompey would be defeated, and Cæsar would triumph no more*.

How pleasing is the sight of a heathen, persuading himself of the immortality of the soul by the bare light of reason! And how painful is the remembrance of his staining his reflections with suicide! But I find in the firmness which resulted from his meditations, a motive to obey the precept of the wise man in the text. While the soul floats in uncertainty, while it hovers between light and darkness, persuasion and doubt; while it hath only presumptions and probabilities in favour of religion; it will find it impossible to view death without terror: but an enlightened, established christian finds in his religion a sure refuge against all his fears.

If a pagan Cato defied death, what cannot a christian Cato do? If a disciple of Plato could pierce through the clouds, which hid futurity from him, what cannot a disciple of Jesus Christ do? If a few proofs, the dictates of unassisted reason, calmed the agitations of Cato, what cannot all the luminous proofs, all the glorious demonstrations do, which ascertain the evidence of another life? God grant we may know the *truth* by our own experiences! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

* Plutarch M. Cato Min.

SERMON

SERMON II.

THE ENEMIES AND THE ARMS OF CHRISTIANITY.

Preached on Easter-Day.

EPH. vi. 11, 12, 13.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.*

IT is a very remarkable circumstance of the life of Jesus Christ, my brethren, that, while he was performing the most public act of his devotedness to the will of God, and while God was giving the most glorious proofs of his approbation of him, Satan attacked him with his most violent assaults. Jesus Christ, having spent thirty years in meditation and retirement, preparatory to the important ministry, for which he came into the world, had just entered on the functions of it. He had consecrated himself to God by baptism; the holy Spirit had descended on him in a visible form; a heavenly voice had proclaimed in the air, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, Matt. iii. 17. and he was going to meditate forty days and nights on the engagements, on which he had entered, and which he intended to fulfil. These circumstances, so proper in all appearance, to prevent the approach of Satan, are precisely

those, of which he availed himself to thwart the design of salvation, by endeavouring to produce rebellious sentiments in the Saviour's mind.

My brethren, the conduct of this wicked spirit to *the author and finisher of our faith*, Heb. xii. 2. is a pattern of his conduct to all them, who fight under his banners. Never doth this enemy of our salvation more furiously attack us, than when we seem to be most sure of victory. You, my brethren, will experience his assaults as well as Jesus Christ did. Would to God, we could assure ourselves, that it would be glorious to you, as it was to the divine Redeemer! Providence unites to day the two festivals of Easter, and the Lord's-supper. In keeping the first, we have celebrated the anniversary of an event, without which *our preaching is vain, your faith is vain, and ye are yet in your sins*, 1 Cor. xv. 14. 17. I mean, the resurrection of the Saviour of the world. In celebrating the second, you have renewed your professions of fidelity to that Jesus, who was *declared*, with so much glory, *to be the Son of God, by the resurrection of the dead*, Rom. i. 4. It is precisely in these circumstances, that Satan renews his efforts to obscure the evidences of your faith, and to weaken your fidelity to Christ. In these circumstances also, we double our efforts to enable you to defeat his assaults, in which, alas! many of us choose rather to yield than to conquer. The strengthening of you is our design; my dear brethren, assist us in it.

And thou, O great God, who callest us to fight with formidable enemies, leave us not to our own weakness: *teach our hands to war, and our fingers to fight*, Psal. cxlvi. 1. Cause us *always to triumph in Christ*, 2 Cor. ii. 14. Make us *more than conquerors through him that loved us*, Rom. viii. 37. Our enemies are thine, *arise, O God, let thine enemies be scattered, let them that hate thee flee before thee!* Amen. Psal. lxviii. 1.

All is metaphorical in the words of my text. St. Paul represents the temptations of a christian under the image of a combat, particularly, of a wrestling. In ordinary combats there is some proportion between the combatants: but in this, which engageth the christian, there is no proportion at all. A christian, who may be said to be, more properly than his Redeemer, *despised and rejected of men*, Isa. liii. 3. a man, who *is the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things*, 1 Cor. iv. 13. is called to resist, not only *flesh and*

and blood, feeble men like himself: but men, before whom imagination prostrates itself, men, of whom the holy Spirit says, *Ye are gods*, Psal. lxxxii. 6. that is, potentates and kings. *We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.*

Moreover, a christian, who, whatever degree of light and knowledge grace hath bestowed on him, whatever degree of steadiness and resolution he hath acquired in christianity, always continues a man, is called to resist a superior order of intelligences, whose power we cannot exactly tell, but, who, the scripture assures us, can, in some circumstances, raise tempests, infect the air, and disorder all the elements; I mean devils. *We wrestle against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

As St. Paul represents the temptations of a christian under the notion of a *war*, so he represents the dispositions, that are necessary to overcome them, under the idea of armour. In the words, which follow the text, he carries the metaphor further than the genius of our language will allow. He gives the christian *a military belt, and shoes, a helmet, a sword, a shield, a buckler*, with which he resisteth *all the fiery darts of the wicked.* But I cannot discuss all these articles, without diverting this exercise from its chief design. By laying aside the figurative language of the apostle, and by reducing the figures to truth, I reduce the temptations, with which the devil and his angels attack the christian, to two general ideas. The first are sophisms, to seduce him from the evidence of *truth;* and the second are inducements, to make him desert the dominion of *virtue.* The christian is able to overcome these two kinds of temptations. The christian remains victorious after a war, which seems, at first, so very unequal. This is precisely the meaning of the text. *We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.*

I. The first artifices of Satan are intended to seduce the christian from the *truth*, and, we must own, these darts were never so poisonous as they are now. The emissaries of the devil in the time of St. Paul; the heathen philosophers, the

scribes and pharisees, were but scholars and novices in the art of colouring falshood, in comparison of our deists, and sceptics, and other antagonists of our holy religion. But, however formidable they may appear, we are able to make them *lick the dust*, Micah vii. 17. and as the art of disguising error was never carried so far before, so, thanks be to God, my brethren, that of unmasking falshood, and of displaying truth in all its glory, has extended with it.

The christian knows how to disentangle truth from six artifices of error. There are six sophisms, that prevail in those wretched productions, which our age hath brought forth for the purpose of subverting the truth.

1. The first artifice is the confounding of those matters, which are proposed to our discussion; and the requiring of metaphysical evidence of facts which are not capable of it.

2. The second artifice is the opposing of possible circumstances against other circumstances, which are evident and sure.

3. The next artifice pretends to weaken the evidence of known things, by arguments taken from things that are unknown.

4. The fourth artifice is an attempt to render the doctrines of the gospel absurd and contradictory, under pretence that they are obscure.

5. The fifth artifice proposeth arguments foreign from the subject in hand.

6. The last forms objections, which derive their weight, not from their own intrinsic gravity; but from the superiority of the genius of him, who proposeth them.

1. The *matters*, which are proposed to our discussion, *are confounded;* and metaphysical evidence of facts is required, which are not, in the nature of them, capable of this kind of evidence. We call that *metaphysical evidence*, which is founded on a clear idea of the essence of a subject. For example, we have a clear idea of a certain number: if we affirm, that the number, of which we have a clear idea, is equal, or unequal, the proposition is capable of metaphysical evidence: But a question of fact can only be proved by an union of circumstances, no one of which, taken apart, would be sufficient to prove the fact, but which, taken altogether, make a fact beyond a doubt. As it is not allowable to oppose certain circumstances against a proposition, that hath metaphysical evidence, so it is unreasonable to require metaphysical evidence to prove a matter of fact. I have

have a clear notion of a given number, I conclude from this notion that the number is equal or unequal, and it is in vain to object to me, that all the world does not reason as I do. Let it be objected to me, that they, who affirm that the number is equal or unequal, have perhaps some interest in affirming it. Objections of this kind are nothing to the purpose, they are circumstances, which do not, at all, affect the nature of the number, nor the evidence on which I affirm an equality, or an inequality, of the given number; for I have a clear idea of the subject in hand. In like manner, I see an union of circumstances, which uniformly attest the truth of a fact, under my examination: I yield to this evidence, and in vain is it objected to me, that it is not metaphysical evidence, the subject before me is not capable of it.

We apply this maxim to all the facts, on which the truth of religion turns, such as these. There was such a man as Moses, who related what he saw, and who himself wrought several things which he recorded. There were such men as the prophets, who wrote the books that bear their names, and who foretold many events several ages before they came to pass. Jesus, the son of Mary, was born in the reign of the emperor Augustus, preached the doctrines, which are recorded in the gospel, and by crucifixion was put to death. We make a particular application of this maxim to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which we this day commemorate, and it forms a shield to resist *all the fiery darts* that attack it. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact, which we ought to prove; it is an extraordinary fact, for the demonstration of which, we allow, stronger proofs ought to be adduced, than for the proof of a fact, that comes to pass in the ordinary course of things. But, after all, it is a fact; and, in demonstrating facts, no proofs ought to be required, but such as establish facts. We have the better right to reason thus with our opponents, because they do not support their historical scepticism without restrictions. On the contrary, they admit some facts, which they believe on the evidence of a very few circumstances. But, if a few circumstances demonstrate some facts, why doth not an union of all possible circumstances demonstrate other facts?

2. The second artifice is *the opposing of possible circumstances*, which may, or may not be, *against other circumstances, which are evident and sure.* All arguments, that are founded on possible circumstances, are only uncertain conjectures,

conjectures, and groundless suppositions. Perhaps there may have been floods, perhaps fires, perhaps earthquakes, which by abolishing the memorials of past events, prevent our tracing things back from age to age to demonstrate the eternity of the world, and our discovery of monuments against religion. This is a strange way of reasoning against men, who are armed with arguments, which are taken from phænomena, avowed, notorious, and real. When we dispute against infidelity; when we establish the existence of a Supreme Being; when we affirm that the Creator of the universe is eternal in his duration, wise in his designs, powerful in his executions, and magnificent in his gifts; we do not reason on probabilities, nor attempt to establish a thesis on a may-be. We do not say, Perhaps there may be a firmament that covers us; perhaps there may be a sun, which enlightens us; perhaps there may be stars, which shine in the firmament; perhaps the earth may support us; perhaps aliments may nourish us; perhaps we breathe; perhaps air may assist respiration; perhaps there may be a symmetry in nature, and in the elements. We produce these phœnomena, and we make them the basis of our reasoning, and of our faith.

3. The third artifice consisteth in *the weakening of the evidence of known things, by arguments taken from things which are unknown.* This is another source of sophisms invented to support infidelity. It grounds a part of the difficulties which are opposed to the system of religion, not on what is known, but on what is not known. Of what use are all the treasures which are concealed in the depths of the sea? Why are so many metals buried in the bowels of the earth? Of what use are so many stars which glitter in the firmament? Why are there so many deserts uninhabited, and uninhabitable? Why so many mountains inaccessible? Why so many insects, which are a burden to nature, and which seem designed only to disfigure it? Why did God create men who must be miserable, and whose misery he could not but foresee? Why did he confine revelation for so many ages to one single nation, and in a manner, to one single family? Why doth he still leave such an infinite number of people to *sit in darkness and in the shadow of death?* Hence the infidel concludes, either that there is no God, or that he hath not the perfections which we attribute to him. The christian, on the contrary, grounds his system on principles that are evident and sure.

We

We derive our arguments, not from what we know not, but from what we do know. We derive them from characters of intelligence, which fall under our observation, and which we see with our own eyes. We derive them from the nature of finite beings. We derive them from the united attestations of all mankind. We derive them from miracles which were wrought in favour of religion. We draw them from our own hearts, which evince, by a kind of reasoning superior to all argument, superior to all scholastic demonstrations, that religion is made for man, that the Creator of man is the author of religion.

4. The fourth artifice is *an attempt to prove a doctrine contradictory and absurd, because it is obscure.* Some doctrines of religion are obscure ;but none are contradictory. God acts towards us in regard to the doctrines of faith, as he doth in regard to the duties of practice. When he giveth us laws, he giveth them as a master; not as a tyrant. Were he to impose laws on us, which are contrary to order, which would debase our natures, and which would make innocence productive of misery: this would not be to ordain laws as a master; but as a tyrant. Then our duties would be in direct opposition. That which would oblige us to obey, would oblige us to rebel. It is the eminence of the perfections of God, which engageth us to obey him: but his perfections would be injured by the imposition of such laws as these, and therefore we should be instigated to rebellion.

In like manner, God hath characterized truth and error. Were it possible for him to give error the characters of truth, and truth the characters of error, there would be a direct opposition in our ideas; and the same reason which would oblige us to believe, would oblige us to disbelieve: because that which engageth us to believe, when God speaks, is, that he is infallibly true: Now if God were to command us to believe contradictions, he would cease to be infallibly true; because nothing is more opposite to truth than self-contradiction. This is the maxim which we admit, and on which we ground our faith in the mysteries of religion. A wise man ought to know his own weakness; to convince himself that there are questions which he hath not capacity to answer; to compare the greatness of the object with the littleness of the intelligence, to which the object is proposed; and to perceive that this disproportion is the only cause of some difficulties which have appeared so formidable to him.

Let

Let us form grand ideas of the Supreme Being. What ideas ought we to form of him? Never hath a preacher a fairer opportunity of giving a scope to his meditation, and of letting his imagination loose, than when he describes the grandeur of that which is most grand. But I do not mean to please your fancies by pompous descriptions; but to edify your minds by distinct ideas. God is an infinite being. In an infinite being there must be things which infinitely surpass finite understandings; it would be absurd to suppose otherwise. As the scripture treats of this infinite God, it must necessarily treat of subjects which absorb the ideas of a finite mind.

5. The fifth artifice attacks the truth by *arguments foreign from the subject* under consideration. To propose arguments of this kind is one of the most dangerous tricks of error. The most essential precaution that we can use in the investigating of truth, is to distinguish that which is foreign from the subject from that which is really connected with it; and there is no question in divinity, or philosophy, casuistry, or policy, which could afford abstruse and endless disputes, were not every one who talks of it, fatally ingenious in the art of incorporating in it a thousand ideas which are foreign from it.

You hold such and such doctrines, say some; and yet Luther, Calvin, and a hundred celebrated divines in your communion, have advanced many false arguments in defence of it. But what does this signify to me? The question is not whether these doctrines have been defended by weak arguments; but whether the arguments that determine me to receive them, be conclusive, or sophistical and vague.

You receive such a doctrine; but Origin, Tertullian, and St. Augustine did not believe it. And what then? Am I inquiring what these fathers did believe, or what they ought to have believed?

You believe such a doctrine; but very few people believe it beside yourself. The greatest part of Europe, almost all France, all Spain, all Italy, whole kingdoms disbelieve it, and maintain opinions diametrically opposite. And what is all this to me? Am I examining what doctrines have the greatest number of partisans, or what doctrines ought to have the most universal spread.

You embrace such a doctrine; but many illustrious persons, cardinals, kings, emperors, triple-crowned heads, reject

ject what you receive. But what avails this reasoning to me! Am I considering the rank of those who receive a doctrine, or the reasons which ought to determine them to receive it? Have cardinals, have kings, have emperors, have triple-crowned heads, the clearest ideas? Do they labour more than all other men? Are they the most indefatigable inquirers after truth? Do they make the greatest sacrifices to order? Are they, of all mankind, the first to lay aside those prejudices and passions which envelope and obscure the truth?

6. The last artifice is this. *Objections which are made against the truth, derive their force, not from their own reasonableness, but from the superiority of the genius of him who proposeth them.* There is no kind of truth which its defenders would not be obliged to renounce, were it right to give up a proposition, because we could not anwser all the objections which were formed against it. A mechanic could not answer the arguments that I could propose to him, to prove when he walks, that there is no motion in nature, that it is the highest absurdity to suppose it. A mechanic could not answer the arguments that I could propose to him, to prove that there is no matter, even while he felt and touched his own body, which is material. A mechanic could not answer the arguments that I could propose to him, when he had finished his day's work, to prove that I gave him five shillings, even when I had given him but three. And yet a mechanic hath more reason for his assertions, than the greatest geniusses in the universe have for their objections, when he affirms that I gave him but three shillings, that there is a motion, that there is a mass of matter to which his soul is united, and in which it is but too often, in a manner buried as in a tomb.

You simple, but sincere souls; you spirits of the lowest class of mankind, but often of the highest at the tribunal of reason and good sense; this article is intended for you. Weigh the words of the second commandment, *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, thou shalt not bow down thyself to them.* You have more reason to justify your doctrine and worship, than all the doctors of the universe have to condemn them, by their most specious, and in regard to you, by their most indissoluble objections. Worship Jesus Christ in imitation of the angels of heaven, to whom God said, *Let all the angels of God worship him*, Heb. i. 6. Pray to him after the example of St. Stephen,

and say unto him, as that holy martyr said in the hour of death, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit*, Acts vii. 59. Believe on the testimony of the inspired writers, that he is eternal, as his Father is; that, with the Father, he is the Creator of the world; that, like the Father, he is almighty; that he hath all the essential attributes of the Deity, as the Father hath. You have more reason for these doctrines, and for this worship than the most refined sophists have for all their most specious objections, even for those which to you are the most unanswerable. *Hold that fast which ye have, let no man take your crown*, Rev. iii. 11.

II. We have seen the darts which Satan shoots at us to subdue us to the dominion of *error:* let us now examine those with which he aims to make us submit to the empire of *vice:* But lest we should overcharge your memories with too many precepts, we will take a method different from that which we have followed in the former part of this discourse; and in order to give you a more lively idea of that steadiness with which the apostle intended to animate us, we will shew it you reduced to practice; we will represent such a christian as St. Paul himself describes in the text, *wrestling against flesh and blood, against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* We will shew you the christian resisting four sorts of the *fiery darts of the wicked.* The false maxims of the world. The pernicious examples of the multitude. Threatenings and persecutions; and the snares of sensual pleasures.

1. Satan attacks the christian with *false maxims of the world.* These are some of them. Christians are not obliged to practise a rigid morality. In times of persecution, it is allowable to palliate our sentiments, and if the heart be right with God, there is no harm in a conformity to the world. The God of religion is the God of nature, and it is not conceivable that religion should condemn the feelings of nature; or that the ideas of fire and brimstone, with which the scriptures are filled, should have any other aim, than to prevent men from carrying vice to extremes: they cannot mean to restrain every act of sin. The time of youth is a season of pleasure. We ought not to aspire at saintship. We must do as other people do. It is beneath a man of honour to put up an affront, a gentleman ought to require satisfaction. No reproof is due to him who hurts nobody but himself. Time

must

must be killed. Detraction is the salt of conversation. Impurity, indeed, is intolerable in a woman: but it is very pardonable in men. Human frailty excuseth the greatest excesses. To pretend to be perfect in virtue is to subvert the order of things, and to metamorphose man into a pure disembodied intelligence. My brethren, how easy is it to make proselytes to a religion so exactly fitted to the depraved propensities of the human heart!

These maxims have a singular character, they seem to unite that which is most irregular with that which is most regular in the heart; and they are the more likely to subvert our faith, because they seem to be consistent with it. However, all that they aim at is to unite heaven and hell, and, by a monstrous assemblage of heterogeneous objects, they propose to make us enjoy the pleasures of sin and the joys of heaven. If Satan were openly to declare to us, that we must proclaim war with God; that we must make an alliance with him against the divine power; that we must oppose his majesty; reason and conscience would reject propositions so detestable and gross. But, when he attacks us by such motives, as we have related; when he tells us, not that we must renounce the hopes of heaven, but that a few steps in an easy path will conduct us thither: When he invites us, not to deny religion, but content ourselves with observing a few articles of it: When he doth not strive to render us insensible to the necessities of a poor neighbour, but to convince us that we should first take care of ourselves, for charity, as they say, begins at home: Do you not conceive, my brethren, that there is in this morality a secret poison, which slides insensibly into the heart, and corrodes all the powers of the soul.

The christian is not vulnerable by any of these maxims. He derives help from the religion which he professeth, against all the efforts, that are employed, to divert him from it; and he conquers by resisting Satan as Jesus Christ resisted him, and, like him, opposeth maxim against maxim, the maxims of Christ against the maxims of the world. Would Satan persuade us that we follow a morality too rigid? It is written, we must *enter in at a strait gate*, Matt. vii. 13. *pluck out the right eye, cut off the right hand*, chap. v. 29, 30. *deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Christ*, chap. xvi. 24. Does Satan say it is allowable to conceal our religion in a time of persecution? It is written, we must *confess* Jesus Christ, *whosoever shall*

deny him before men, him will he deny before his Father who is in heaven; he who loveth father or mother more than him, is not worthy of him, chap. x. 32, 33. 37. Would Satan inspire us with revenge? It is written, *Dearly beloved avenge not yourselves*, Rom. xii. 19. Doth Satan require us to devote our youthful days in sin? It is written, *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth*, Eccles. xii. 1. Does Satan tell us that we must not aspire to be saints? *It is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy*, 1 Pet. i. 16. Would Satan teach us to dissipate time? It is written, we must *redeem time*, Eph. v. 16. we must *number our days*, in order *to apply our hearts unto wisdom*, Psal. xc. 12. Would Satan encourage us to slander our neighbour? It is written, *revilers shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 10. Doth Satan tell us we deserve no reproof when we do no harm? It is written, we are to practise *whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever* constitute *virtue*, whatsoever things are worthy of *praise*, Phil. iv. 8. Would Satan tempt us to indulge impurity? It is written, our *bodies are the members of Christ*, and it is a crime to *make them the members of a harlot*, 1 Cor. vi. 15. Would Satan unite heaven and earth? It is written, there is *no concord between Christ and Belial, no communion between light and darkness*, 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. *no man can serve two masters*, Matt. vi. 24. Doth Satan urge the impossibility of perfection? It is written, *Be ye perfect as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect*, chap. v. 48.

2. There is a difference between those who preach the maxims of Jesus Christ, and those who preach the maxims of the world. The former, alas! are as frail as the rest of mankind, and they themselves are apt to violate the laws which they prescribe to others; so that it must be sometimes said of them, *What they bid you observe, observe and do; but do not ye after their works*, Matt. xxiii. 3. They, who preach the maxims of the world, on the contrary, never fail to confirm the pernicious maxims, which they advance, by their own examples: and hence a second quiver of those *darts*, with which Satan attempts to destroy the virtues of christianity, I mean, *the examples of bad men.*

Each order of men, each condition of life, each society, hath some peculiar vice, and each of these is so established by custom, that we cannot resist it, without being accounted, according to the usual phrase, men of another world.

world. Vicious men are sometimes respectable persons. They are parents, they are ministers, they are magistrates. We bring into the world with us a turn to imitation. Our brain is so formed as to receive impressions from all exterior objects, and, if I may be allowed to speak so, to take the form of every thing that affecteth it. How difficult is it, my brethren, to avoid contagion, when we breathe an air so infected! The desire of pleasing often prompts us to that which our inclinations abhor, and very few people can bear this reproach: you are unfashionable, and unpolite! How much harder is it to resist a torrent, when it falls in with the dispositions of our own hearts! The christian, however, resolutely resisteth this attack, and opposeth model to model, the patterns of Jesus Christ, and of his associates, to the examples of an apostate world.

The first, the great model, the exemplar of all others, is Jesus Christ. Faith, which always fixeth the eyes of a christian on his Saviour, incessantly contemplates his virtues, and also inclines him to holiness by stirring up his natural propensity to imitation. Jesus Christ reduced every virtue, which he preached, to practice. Did he preach a detachment from the world? And could it be carried further than the divine Saviour carried it?, He was exposed to hunger, and to thirst, to the inclemency of seasons, and to the contempt of mankind; he had no fortune to recommend him to the world, no great office to render him conspicuous there. Did he preach zeal? He passed the day in the instructing of men, and, as the saving of souls filled up the day, the night he spent in praying to God. Did he preach patience? *When he was reviled, he reviled not again*, 1 Pet. ii. 23. Did he preach love? *Greater love than* he, had *no man*, for he *laid down his life for his friends*, John xv. 13. His incarnation, his birth, his life, his cross, his death, are so many voices, each of which cries to us, *Behold how he loved you*, chap. xi. 36.

Had Jesus Christ alone practised the virtues, which he prescribed to us, it might be objected, that a man must be *conceived of the Holy Ghost*, Matt. i. 20. to resist the force of custom. But we have seen many christians, who have walked in the steps of their Master. The primitive church was *compassed about with* a happy society, *a great cloud of witnesses*, Heb. xii. 1. Even now, in spite of the power of corruption, we have many illustrious examples; we can shew magistrates, who are accessible; generals, who are patient;

patient; merchants, who are disinterested; learned men, who are teachable; and devotees, who are lowly and meek.

If the believer could find no exemplary characters on earth, he could not fail of meeting with such in heaven. On earth, it is true, haughtiness, sensuality, and pride, are in fashion. But the believer is not on earth. He is reproached for being a man of another world. He glories in it, he is a man of another world, he is a heavenly man, he is a *citizen of heaven*, Phil. iii. 20. His heart is with his treasure, and his soul, transporting itself by faith into the heavenly regions, beholds customs there different from those which prevail in this world. In heaven, it is the fashion to bless God, to sing his praise, to cry *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts*, Isa. vi. 3. to animate one another in celebrating the glory of the great Supreme, who reigns and fills the place. On earth, fashion proceeds from the courts of kings, and the provinces are polite when they imitate them. The believer is a heavenly courtier; he practiseth *in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation*, the customs of the court, whence he came, and to which he hopes to return.

3. Satan assaults the christian with the *threatenings* of the world, and with the *persecutions* of those who are in power. Virtue, I own, hath a venerable aspect, which attracts respect from them who hate it: but, after all, it is hated. A beneficent man is a troublesome object to a miser: The patience of a believer throws a shade over the character of a passionate man: and the men of the world will always persecute those virtues, which they cannot resolve to practise.

Moreover, there is a kind of persecution, which approacheth to madness, when, to the hatred, which our enemies have n turally against us, they add sentiments of superstion; when, under pretence of religion, they avenge their own cause; and, according to the language of scripture, think that *to kill the* saints is *to render service to God*, John x. 2. Hence so many edicts against primitive christianity, and so many cruel laws against christians themselves. Hence the filling of a thousand deserts with exiles, and a thousand prisons with confessors. Hence the letting loose of bears, and bulls, and lions, on the saints, to divert the inhabitants of Rome. Hence the applying of red hot plates of iron to their flesh. Hence iron pincers to prolong their pain by pulling

pulling them piece-meal. Hence caldrons of boiling oil, in which, by the industrious cruelty of their persecutors, they died by fire and by water too. Hence burning brazen bulls, and seats of fire and flame. Hence the skins of wild beasts, in which they were wrapped, in order to be torn and devoured by dogs. And hence those strange and nameless punishments, which would seem to have rather the air of fables than of historical facts, had not christian persecutors, (good God! must these two titles go together!) had not christian persecutors . . . . . Let us pass this article, my brethren, let us cover these bloody objects with a vail of patience and love.

Ah! how violent is this combat! Shall I open the wounds again, which the mercy of God hath closed? Shall I recal to your memories the falls of some of you? *Give glory to God*, Josh. vii. 19. Cast your eyes for a moment on that fatal day, in which the violence of persecution wrenched from you a denial of the Saviour of the world, whom in your souls you adored; made you sign with a trembling hand, and utter with a faultering tongue those base words against Jesus Christ, *I do not know the man*, Matt. xxvi. 72. Let us own, then, that Satan is infinitely formidable, when he strikes us with the thunderbolts of persecution.

A new combat brings on a new victory, and the constancy of the christian is displayed in many a triumphant banner. Turn over the annals of the church, and behold how a fervid faith hath operated in fiery trials. It hath inspired many Stephens with mercy, who, while they sank under their persecutors, said, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*, Acts vii. 60. Many, with St. Paul, have abounded in patience, and have said, *Being reviled, we bless, being defamed, we intreat*, 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13. It has filled a Barlaam with praise, who, while his hand was held over the fire to scatter that incense, which, in spite of him his persecutors had determined he should offer, sang, as well as he could, *Blessed be the Lord, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight*, Psal. cxliv. 1. It transported that holy woman with joy, who said, as she was going to suffer, Crowns are distributed to-day, and I am going to receive one. It inspired Mark, bishop of Arethusa, with magnanimity, who, according to Theodoret, after he had been mangled and slashed, bathed in a liquid, of which insects are fond, and hung up in the sun to be devoured by them, said to the spectators, I pity you, ye people of the world, I

am

am ascending to heaven, while ye are crawling on earth. And how many marks of Arethusa, how many Barlaams, how many Stephens and Pauls, have we known in our age, whose memories history will transmit to the most distant times!

4. But how formidable soever Satan may be, when he shoots the *fiery darts* of persecution at us, it must be granted, my brethren, he dischargeth others far more dangerous to us, when, having studied our passions, *he presenteth those objects to our hearts, which they idolize*, and gives us the possession, or the hope of possessing them. The first ages of christianity, in which religion felt all the rage of tyrants, were not the most fatal to the church. Great tribulations produced great virtues, and the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. But when under christian emperors, believers enjoyed the privileges of the world, and the profession of the faith was no obstacle to worldly grandeur, the church became corrupt, and by sharing the advantages, partook of the vices of the world.

Among the many different objects which the world offers to our view, there is always one, there are often more, which the heart approves. The heart, which doth not glow at the sight of riches, may sigh after honours. The soul that is insensible to glory, may be enchanted with pleasure. The demon of concupiscence, revolving for ever around us, will not fail to present to each of us that enticement, which of all others, is the most agreeable to us. See his conduct to David. He could not entice him by the idea of a throne to become a parricide, and to stain his hands with the blood of the anointed of the Lord: but as he was inaccessible one way, another art must be tried. He exhibited to his view an object fatal to his innocence: the prophet saw, admired, was dazzled, and inflamed with a criminal passion, and to gratify it, began in adultery, and murder closed the scene.

My brethren, you do not feel these passions now, your souls are attentive to these great truths, and, while you hear of the snares of concupiscence, you discover the vanity of them. But if, instead of our voice, Satan were to utter his; if, instead of being confined within these walls, you were transported to the pinnacle of an eminent edifice; were he there to shew you *all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them*, Matt. iv. 8. and to say to each of you, There, you shall content your pride; here, you shall satiate your vengeance; yonder, you shall roll in voluptuousness:

I fear

I fear, I fear, my brethren, very few of us would say to such a dangerous enemy, *Satan, get thee hence*, ver. 10.

This is the fourth assault, which the demon of cupidity makes on the christian; this the last triumph of christian constancy and resolution. In these assaults the christian is firm. The grand ideas, which he forms of God, make him fear to irritate the Deity, and to raise up such a formidable foe. They fill him with a just apprehension of the folly of that man, who will be happy in spite of God. For self-gratification, at the expence of duty, is nothing else but a determination to be happy in opposition to God. This is the utmost degree of extravagance: *Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?* 1 Cor. x. 22.

Over all, the christian fixeth his eyes on the immense rewards, which God reserveth for him in another world. The good things of this world, we just now observed, have some relation to our passions: But, after all, can the world satisfy them? My passions are infinite, every finite object is inadequate to them. My ambition, my voluptuousness, my avarice, are only irritated, they are not satisfied, by all the objects which the present world exhibits to my view. Christians, we no longer preach to you to limit your desires. Expand them, be ambitious, be covetous, be greedy of pleasure: but be so in a supreme degree. Jerusalem, *enlarge the place of thy tent, stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations, spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes*, Isa. liv. 2. The throne of thy sovereign, the pleasures that are at his right hand, the inexhaustible mines of his happiness, will quench the utmost thirst of thy heart.

From what hath been said, I infer only two consequences, and them, my brethren, I would use, to convince you of the grandeur of a christian, and of the grandeur of an intelligent soul.

1. Let us learn to form *grand ideas of a christian.* The pious man is often disdained in society by men of the world. He is often taxed with narrowness of genius, and meanness of soul. He is often dismissed to keep company with those, whom the world calls *good folks.* But what unjust appraisers of things are mankind! How little doth it become them to pretend to distribute glory! Christian is a grand character. A christian man unites in himself what is

most grand, both in the mind of a philosopher, and in the heart of a hero.

The unshaken steadiness of his soul, elevates him above whatever is most grand in the mind of a philosopher. The philosopher flatters himself, that he is arrived at this grandeur; but he only imagines so; it is the christian who possesseth it. He alone knows how to distinguish the true from the false. The christian is the man, who knoweth how to ascend to heaven, to procure wisdom there, and to bring it down, and to diffuse it on earth. It is the christian, who, having learnt, by the accurate exercise of his reason, the imperfection of his knowledge, and having supplied the want of perfection in himself, by submitting to the decisions of an infallible Being, steadily resisteth all the illusions, and all the sophisms, of error and falshood.

And, as he possesseth, as he surpasseth, whatever is most grand in the mind of a philosopher, so he possesseth whatever is most grand in the heart of a hero. That grandeur, of which the worldly hero vainly imagines himself in possession, the christian alone really enjoys. It is the christian, who first forms the heroical design of taking the perfections of God for his model, and then surmounteth every obstacle that opposeth his laudable career. It is the christian, who hath the courage, not to route an army, neither to cut away through a squadron, nor to scale a wall: but to stem an immortal torrent, to free himself from the maxims of the world, to bear pain, and to despise shame, and, what perhaps may be yet more magnanimous, and more rare, to be impregnable against whole armies of voluptuous attacks. It is the christian, then, who is the only true philosopher, the only real hero. Let us be well persuaded of this truth; if the world despise us, let us, in our turn, despise the world; let us be highly satisfied with that degree of elevation, to which grace hath raised us. This is the first consequence.

2. We infer from this subject *the excellence of your souls.* Two mighty powers dispute the sovereignty over them, God and Satan. Satan employs his subtility to subdue you to him: he terrifies you with threatenings, he enchants you with promises, he endeavours to produce errors in your minds, and passions in your hearts.

On the other hand, God, having redeemed you with the purest and most precious blood, *having shaken*, in your favour, *the heavens, and the earth, the sea, and the dry land*, Hag. ii. 6. still continues to resist Satan for you, to take away

away his prey from him, and, from the highest heavens, to animate you with those grand motives, which we have this day been proposing to your meditation. To-day God would attract you, by the most affecting means, to himself.

While heaven and earth, God and the world, endeavour to gain your souls, do you alone continue indolent? Are you alone ignorant of your own worth? Ah! learn to know your own excellence, triumph over flesh and blood, trample the world beneath your feet, go from conquering to conquer. Listen to the voice, that crieth to you, *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne*, Rev. iii. 21. Continue in the faith, *hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown*, ver. 11. Having fought through life, redouble your believing vigour at the approach of death.

All the wars, which the world makes on your faith, should prepare you for the most great, the most formidable attack of all. *The last enemy, that shall be destroyed, is death*, 1 Cor. xv 26. The circumstances of death are called an agony, that is, a wrestling. In effect, it is the mightiest effort of Satan, and therefore our faith should redouble its vigorous acts.

Then, Satan will attack you with cutting griefs, and doubts, and fears; then will he present to you a deplorable family, whose cries and tears will pierce your hearts, and who, by straightning the ties that bind you to the earth, will raise obstacles to prevent the ascent of your souls to God. He will alarm you with the idea of divine justice, and will terrify you with that of consuming fire, which must devour the adversaries of God. He will paint, in the most dismal colours, all the sad train of your funerals, the mournfully nodding hearse, the torch, the shroud, the coffin, and the pall, the frightful solitude of the tomb, or the odious putrefaction of the grave. At the sight of these sad objects, flesh complains, nature murmurs, religion itself seems to totter and shake: But, fear not; your faith, your faith will support you. Faith will discover those eternal relations into which you are going to enter; the celestial armies, that will soon be your companions; the blessed angels, who wait to receive your souls, and to be your convoy home. Faith will shew you that in the tomb of Jesus Christ, which will sanctify yours; it will remind you of that blessed death, which renders yours precious in the sight of God; it will

assist your souls to glance into eternity; it will open the gates of heaven to you; it will enable you to behold, without murmuring, the earth sinking away from your feet; it will change your death-beds into triumphal chariots, and it will make you exclaim, amidst all the mournful objects, that surround you, *O grave, where is thy victory! O death, where is thy sting!* 1 Cor. xv. 55.

My brethren, our most vehement desires, our private studies, our public labours, our vows, our wishes, and our prayers, we consecrate to prepare you for that great day. *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.* Eph. iii. 14. 16. 21.

SERMON

SERMON III.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

ISAIAH ix. 6, 7.

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his *government and peace* there shall be *no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever.*

I Anticipate the festival, which the goodness, or rather the magnificence of God, invites you to celebrate on Wednesday next. All nature seems to take part in the memorable event, which on that day we shall commemorate, I mean the birth of the Saviour of the world. Herod turns pale on his throne; the devils tremble in hell; the wise men of the East suspend all their speculations, and observe no sign in the firmament except that, which conducts them to the place, where lies the incarnate Word, *God manifest in the flesh,* 1 Tim. iii. 16. an angel from heaven is the herald of the astonishing event, and tells the shepherds, *Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,* Luke ii. 10, 11. *the multitude of the heavenly host* eagerly descend to congratulate men on the Word's assumption of mortal flesh, on his *dwelling among* men, in order to enable them to *behold his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,* John i. 14. they make the air resound with these acclamations, *Glory to God in the highest*

highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men, Luke ii. 14.

What think ye? Does this festival require no preparation of you? Do you imagine, that you shall celebrate it as you ought, if you content yourselves with attending on a few discourses, during which perhaps, while you are present in body, you may be absent in spirit; or with laying aside your temporal cares, and your most turbulent passions, at the church-gates, in order to take them up again, as soon as divine service ends? The king Messiah is about to makes his triumphant entry among you. With what pomp do *the children of this world,* who are *wise,* and, we may add, magnificent *in their generation,* Luke xvi. 8. celebrate the entries of their princes? They strew the roads with flowers, they raise triumphal arches, they express their joy in shouts of victory, and in songs of praise. Come, then, my brethren, let us to-day *prepare the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight,* Matt. iii. 3. let us *be joyful together before the Lord,* let us *make a joyful noise before the Lord the King, for he cometh to judge the earth:* Psal. xcviii. 6, 9. or, to speak in a more intelligible, and in a more evangelical manner; Come ye miserable sinners, loaden with the unsupportable burdens of your sins; Come ye troubled consciences, uneasy at the remembrance of your many idle words, many criminal thoughts, many abominable actions: Come ye poor mortals, *tossed with tempests and not comforted,* Isa. liv. 11. condemned first to bear the infirmities of nature, the caprices of society, the vicissitudes of age, the turns of fortune, and then the horrors of death, and the frightful night of the tomb; Come behold *The Wonderful, The Counsellor, The mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace;* take him into your arms, learn to desire nothing more, when you possess him. May God enable each of you, in transports of joy, to say, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* Amen.

You have heard the prophecy, on which our meditations in this discourse are to turn. *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever.* These words are more dazzling than clear: let us fix

their

their true meaning; and, in order to ascertain that, let us divide this discourse into two parts,

I. Let us explain the prediction.
II. Let us shew its accomplishment.

In the first part, we will prove, that the prophet had the Messiah in view: and, in the second, that our Jesus had fully answered the design of the prophet, and hath accomplished, in the most just and sublime of all senses, the whole prediction: *Unto us a child is born*, and so on.

I. Let us explain the prophet's prediction, and let us fix on the extraordinary child, to whom he gives the magnificent titles in the text. Indeed, the grandeur of the titles sufficiently determines the meaning of the prophet; for to whom, except to the Messiah, can these appellations belong, *The Wonderful, The Counsellor, The mighty God, the Prince of Peace, The everlasting Father?* This natural sense of the text, is supported by the authority of an inspired writer, and what is, if not of any great weight in point of argument, at least, very singular as an historical fact, it is supported by the authority of an angel. The inspired writer, whom we mean, is St. Matthew, who manifestly alludes to the words of the text, by quoting those which precede them, which are connected with them, and which he applies to the times of the Messiah: for, having related the imprisonment of John, and, in consequence of that, the retiring of Jesus Christ into Galilee, he adds, that the divine Saviour *came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up*, Matt. iv. 12. The angel, of whom I spoke, is Gabriel; who when he declared to Mary the choice which God had made of her to be the mother of the Messiah, applied to her Son the characters, by which Isaiah describes the child in the text, and paints him in the same colours; *Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God*

God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end, Luke i. 31, &c.

How conclusive soever these proofs may appear in favour of the sense we have given of the prophecy, they do not satisfy this intractable age, which is always ready to embrace any thing that seems likely to enervate the truths of religion. Sincerity requires us to acknowledge, that although our prophecy is clear of itself, yet there ariseth some obscurity from the order in which it is placed, and from its connection with the foregoing and following verses. On each we will endeavour to throw some light, and, for this purpose, we will go back, and analyse this, and the two preceding chapters.

When Isaiah delivered this prophecy, Ahaz reigned over the kingdom of Judah, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, over that of Israel. You cannot be ignorant of the mutual jealousy of these two kingdoms. There is often more hatred between two parties, whose religion is almost the same, than between those whose doctrines are in direct opposition. Each considers the other as near the truth: each is jealous lest the other should obtain it: and, it is more likely that they, who hold the essential truths of religion, should surpass others sooner than they, who raise the very foundations of it, the former are greater objects of envy than the latter. The kingdoms of Israel and Judah were often more envenomed against one another than against foreigners. This was the case in the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah. Pekah, king of Israel, to the shame of the ten tribes, discovered a disposition like that, which hath sometimes made the christian world blush; I mean, that a prince, who worshipped the true God, in order to destroy his brethren, made an alliance with an idolater. He allied himself to Rezin, a pagan prince, who reigned over that part of Syria, which constituted the kingdom of Damascus. The kingdom of Judah had often yielded to the forces of these kings, even when each had separately made war with it. Now they were united; and intended jointly to fall on the Jews, and to overwhelm, rather than to besiege, Jerusalem. Accordingly, the consternation was so great in the holy city, that, the scripture says, *The heart of Ahaz was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind,* Isa. vii. 2.

Although

Although the kingdom of Judah had too well deserved the punishments, which threatened it; and although a thousand outrages, with which the inhabitants had insulted the Majesty of heaven, seemed to guarantee their country to the enemy, yet God came to their assistance. He was touched, if not with the sincerity of their repentance, at least with the excess of their miseries. He commanded Isaiah to encourage their hopes. He even promised them, not only that all the designs of their enemies should be rendered abortive: but that the two confederate kingdoms *within three score and five years*, ver. 8. should be entirely destroyed. Moreover, he gave Ahaz the choice of a sign to convince himself of the truth of the promise. Ahaz was one of the most wicked kings, that ever sat on the throne of Judah: so that the scripture could give no worse character of this prince, nor describe his perseverance in sin more fully, than by saying that he *was always Ahaz**. He refused to choose a sign, not because he felt one of those noble emotions, which makes a man submit to the testimony of God without any more proof of its truth than the testimony itself: but because he was inclined to infidelity and ingratitude, and, probably, because he trusted in his ally, the king of Assyria. Notwithstanding his refusal, God gave him signs, and informed him, that before the prophet's two children, one of whom was already born, and the other would be born shortly, should arrive at years of discretion, the two confederate kings should retreat from Judea, and should be entirely destroyed.

Of the first child, see what the seventh chapter of the Revelations of our prophet says. We are there told, that this son of the prophet was named Shearjashub, that is, *the remnant shall return*, ver. 3. a name expressive of the meaning of the sign, which declared that the Jews should return from their rebellions, and that God would return from his anger. The other child, then unborn, is mentioned in the eighth chapter, where it is said *the prophetess bare a son*, ver. 3.

God commanded the prophet to take the first child, and to carry him to that pool, or piece of water, which was formed by the waters of Siloah, which supplied the stream known by the name of *The fuller's conduit*, 2 Kings xviii. 17. and which was at the foot of the eastern wall of Jerusalem.

* 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. *This* is that *king Ahaz*. Eng. Version. *C'estoit* toujours *le roi Achaz*. Fr. *Idem* erat *rex Achaz*. Jun. Tremel.

lem. The prophet was ordered to produce the child in the presence of all the affrighted people, and to say to them, *Before this child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest, shall be forsaken of both her kings*, Isa. vii. 16. If this translation be retained, *the land* signifies the kingdom of Israel, and that of Syria, from which the enemy came, and which on account of their coming the Jews *abhorred*. I should rather render the words, *the land, for which thou art afraid*, and by *the land* understand Judea, which was then in a very dangerous state. But the prophecy began to be accomplished in both senses about a year after it was uttered. Tiglath Pileser, king of Assyria, not only drew off the forces of Rezin and Pekah, from the siege of Jerusalem, but he drave them also from their own countries. He first attacked Damascus. Rezin, quitted his intended conquest, and returned to defend his capital, where he was slain; and all his people were carried into captivity, 2 Kings xvi. 9. Tiglath Pileser then marched into the kingdom of Israel, and victory marched along with him at the head of his army, 1 Chron. v. 26. He subdued the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, all the inhabitants of Galilee, and the tribe of Nephthalim, and carried them captives beyond Euphrates; and sixty five years after, that is, sixty five years after the prediction of the total ruin of the kingdom of Israel by the prophet Amos, the prophecy was fulfilled by Salmanassar, chap. vii. 11. according to the language of our prophet, *within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people*, Isa. vii. 8. Thus was this prophecy accomplished, *before this child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land, for which thou art afraid, shall be forsaken of both her kings.*

God determined that the prophet's second child should also be a sign of the truth of the same promise. He assured Isaiah, that before the child, who should shortly be born, could learn to articulate the first sounds which children were taught to pronounce; *before the child should have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus, and the spoil of Samaria*, that is, of the kingdom of Israel, *should be taken away by the kingof Assyria*, chap. viii. 4. This is the same promise confirmed by a second sign. God usually giveth more than one, when he confirmeth any very interesting prediction, as we

see

see in the history of Pharaoh, and the patriarch Joseph, Gen. xli. 1, &c.

But, as all the mercies, that were bestowed on the Jews from the time of Abraham, were grounded on the covenant, which God had made with that patriarch, their common father and head; or rather, as, since the fall, men could expect no favour of God but in virtue of the mediator of the church; it is generally to be observed in the prophecies, that when God gave them a promise, he directed their attention to this grand object. Either the idea of the covenant, or the idea of the mediator, was a seal, which God put to his promises, and a bar against the unbelief and distrust of his people. Every thing might be expected from a God, whose goodness was so infinite, as to prepare such a noble victim for the salvation of mankind. He, who would confine Satan in everlasting chains, and vanquish sin and death, was fully able to deliver his people from the incursions of Rezin, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah. To remove the present fears of the Jews, God reminds them of the wonders of his love, which he had promised to display in favour of his church in ages to come: and commands his prophet to say to them "Ye trembling leaves of the wood, shaken with "every wind, peace be to you! Ye timorous Jews, cease "your fears! let not the greatness of this temporal deliver- "ance, which I now promise you, excite your doubts! God "hath favours incomparably greater in store for you, they "shall be your guarantees for those, which ye are afraid to "expect. Ye are in covenant with God. Ye have a right "to expect those displays of his love in your favour which "are least credible. Remember the *blessed seed*, which he "promised to your ancestors, Gen. xxii. 18. *Behold! a "virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his "name Immanuel*, Isa. vii. 14. The spirit of prophecy, "that animates me, enables me to penetrate through all the "ages that separate the present moment from that in which "the promise shall be fulfilled. I see the divine child, my "*faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence "of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. and, grounded on the "word of that God, *who changeth not*, Mal. iii. 6. who *is "not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man "that he should repent*, Numb. iii. 19. I dare speak of a "miracle, which will be wrought eight hundred years hence, "as if it had been wrought to-day, *Unto us a child is born, "unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon*

" *his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful,*
" *Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father,*
" *The Prince of Peace.*"

This, my brethren, is the prophet's scope in the three chapters, which we have analyzed, and particularly in the text. But, if any one of you receive our exposition without any farther discussion, he will discover more docility than we require, and he would betray his credulity without proving his conviction. How often doth a commentator substitute his own opinions for those of his author, and by forging, if I may be allowed to speak so, a new text, elude the difficulties of that which he ought to explain? Let us act more ingenuously. There are two difficulties, which attend our comment; one is a particular, the other is a general difficulty.

The *particular* difficulty is this. We have supposed, that the mysterious child, spoken of in our text, is the same, of whom the prophet speaks, when he says, *A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel:* and that this child is different from that, whom Isaiah gave for a sign of the present temporal deliverance, and of whom it is said, *before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land, that thou abhorrest, shall be forsaken of both her kings.* This supposition does not seem to agree with the text; read the following verses, which are taken from the seventh chapter. *Behold! a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel: Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. But before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land, that thou abhorrest, shall be forsaken of both her kings,* ver. 14, 15, 16. Do not the last words, *before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good,* seem to belong to the words which immediately precede them, *Behold! a virgin shall conceive and bear a son? Immanuel,* then, who was to be born of a *virgin,* could not be the Messiah; the prophet must mean the child, of whom he said, *before he know to refuse the evil, and choose the good,* Judea shall be delivered from the two confederate kings.

How indissoluble soever this objection may appear it is only an apparent difficulty, and it lies less in the nature of the thing, than in the arrangement of the terms. Represent to yourselves the prophet executing the order, which God had given

given him, as the third verse of the seventh chapter relates. *Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool.* Imagine Isaiah, in the presence of the Jews, holding his son Shearjashub in his arms, and addressing them in this manner. The token, that God gives you, of your present deliverance, that he is still your God, and that ye are still his covenant people, is the renewal of the promise to you, which he made to your ancestors concerning the Messiah: to convince you of the truth of what I assert I discharge my commission, *Behold! a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,* that is, *God with us.* He shall be brought up like the children of men, *butter and honey shall he eat, until he know to refuse the evil, and choose the good,* that is, until he arrive at years of maturity. In virtue of this promise, which will not be ratified till some ages have expired, behold what I promise you now; *before the child,* not before the child, whom, I said just now, *a virgin should bear:* but before the child in my arms, (the phrase may be rendered *before this child)* before Shearjashub, whom I now lift up, *shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land, for which ye are in trouble, shall be forsaken of both her kings.* You see, my brethren, *the child,* whom, the prophet said, *a virgin should conceive,* could not be Shearjashub, who was actually present in his father's arms. The difficulty, therefore, is only apparent, and, as I observed before, it lay in the arrangement of the terms, and not in the nature of the thing. This is our answer to what I called a *particular* difficulty.

A *general* objection may be made against the manner, in which we have explained these chapters, and in which, in general, we explain other prophecies. Allow me to state this objection in all its force, and, if I may use the expression, in all its enormity, in order to shew you, in the end, all its levity and folly.

The odious objection is this. An unbeliever would say, The three chapters of Isaiah, of which you have given an arbitrary analysis, are equivocal and obscure, like the greatest part of those compilations, which compose the book of the visionary flights of this prophet, and like all the writings, that are called *predictions, prophecies, revelations.* Obscurity is the grand character of them, even in the opinion of those who have given sublime and curious explanations of them. They are capable of several senses. Who hath

received

received authority to develope those ambiguous writings, to determine the true meaning, among the many different ideas, which they excite in the reader, and to each of which the terms are alike applicable! During seventeen centuries, christians have racked their invention to put a sense on the writings of the prophets advantageous to christianity, and the greatest geniusses have endeavoured to interpret them in favour of the christian religion. Men, who have been famous for their erudition and knowledge, have taken the most laborious pains to methodize these writings; one generation of great men hath succeeded another in the undertaking; is it astonishing that some degree of success hath attended their labours, and that by dint of indefatigable industry, they have rendered those prophecies venerable, which would have been accounted dark and void of design, if less pains had been taken to adapt a design, and less violence had been used in arranging them in order?

This is the objection in all its force, and, as I said before, in all its enormity. Let us inquire whether we can give a solution proportional to this boasted objection of infidelity. Our answer will be comprised in a chain of propositions, which will guard you against those, who find mystical meanings, where there are none, as well as against those, who disown them, where they are. To these purposes attend to the following propositions.

1. They were not the men of our age, who forged the book, in which, we imagine, we discover such profound knowledge: we know, it is a book of the most venerable antiquity, and we can demonstrate that it is the most ancient book in the world.

2. This venerable antiquity, however, is not the chief ground of our admiration: the benevolence of its design; the grandeur of its ideas; the sublimity of its doctrines; the holiness of its precepts; are, according to our notion of things, if not absolute proofs of its divinity, at least, advantageous presumptions in its favour.

3. Among divers truths, which it contains, and which, it may be supposed, some superior geniusses might have discovered, I meet with some, the attainment of which I cannot reasonable attribute to the human mind: of this kind are some predictions, obscure, I grant, to those to whom they were first delivered, but rendered very clear since by the events. Such are these two among many others. The people, who are in covenant with God, shall be excluded; and

and people, who are not, shall be admitted. I see the accomplishment of these predictions with my own eyes, in the rejection of the Jews, and in the calling of the Gentiles.

4. The superior characters, which signalize these books, give them the right of being mysterious in some places, without exposing them to the charge of being equivocal, or void of meaning; for some works have acquired this right. When an author hath given full proof of his capacity in some propositions, which are clear and intelligible; and when he expresseth himself, in other places, in a manner obscure, and hard to be understood, he is not to be taxed, all on a sudden, with writing irrationally. A meaning is to be sought in his expressions. It is not to be supposed, that geniusses of the highest order sink at once beneath the lowest minds. Why do we not entertain such notions of our prophets? Why is not the same justice due to the extraordinary men, whose respectable writings we are pleading for; to our Isaiahs, and Jeremiahs, which is allowed to Juvenal and Virgil? What! shall some pretty thought of the latter, shall some ingenious stroke of the former, conciliate more respect to them, than the noble sentiments of God, the sublime doctrines, and the virtuous precepts of the holy scriptures, can obtain for the writers of the bible?

5. We do not pretend, however, to abuse that respect, which it would be unjust to withhold from our authors. We do not pretend to say that every obscure passage contains a mystery, or that, whenever a passage appears unintelligible, we have a right to explain it in favour of the doctrine, which we profess: but we think it right to consider any passage in these books prophetical, when it has the three following marks.

The first is *the insufficiency of the literal meaning.* I mean, a text must be accounted prophetical, when it cannot be applied, without offering violence to the language, to any event, that fell out when it was spoken, or to any then present, or past object.

2. The second character of a prophecy, is *an infallible commentary.* I mean, when an author of acknowledged authority, gives a prophetical sense to a passage under consideration, we ought to submit to his authority, and adopt his meaning.

3. The last character is *a perfect conformity between the prediction and the event.* I mean, when prophecies, compared with events, appear to have been completely accomplished,

complished, several ages after they had been promulged, it cannot be fairly urged that the conformity was a lucky hit: but, it ought to be acknowledged, that the prophecy proceeded from God, who, being alone capable of foreseeing what would happen, was alone capable of foretelling the event, in a manner so circumstantial and exact. All these characters unite in favour of the text, which we have been explaining, and in favour of the three chapters, which we have, in general, expounded.

The first character, that is, the insufficiency of a literal sense, agrees with our explication. Let any event, in the time of Isaiah, be named, any child born then, or soon after, of whom the prophet could reasonably affirm what he does in our text, and in the other verse, which we have connected with it. *A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

The second distinguishing mark, that is, an infallible commentary, agrees with our explication. Our evangelists and apostles, those venerable men, whose mission comes recommended to us by the most glorious miracles, by the healing of the sick, by the expulsion of demons, by the raising of the dead, by a general subversion of all nature, our evangelists and apostles took these passages in the same sense, in which we take them, they understood them of the Messiah, as we have observed before.

The third character, that is, a perfect conformity between event and prediction, agrees also with our explication. We actually find *a child*, some ages after the time of Isaiah, who exactly answers the description of him, of whom the prophet spoke. The features are similar, and we own the likeness. Our Jesus was really born of *a virgin;* he was truly *Immanuel, God with us:* in him are really united, all the titles, and all the perfections, of the *Wonderful: The Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father;* as we will presently prove. Can we help giving a mysterious meaning to these passages? Can we refuse to acknowledge, that the prophet intended to speak of the Messiah? These are the steps, and this is the end of our meditation in favour of the mystical sense, which we have ascribed to the words of the text.

Would

Would to God, the enemies of our mysteries would open their eyes to these objects, and examine the weight of these arguments! Would to God, a love, I had almost said a rage, for independency, for a system that indulges, and inflames the passions, had not put some people on opposing these proofs! Infidelity and scepticism would have made less havoc among us, and would not have decoyed away so many disciples from truth and virtue! And would to God also, christian ministers would never attempt to attack the systems of infidels and sceptics without the armour of demonstration! Would to God, love of the marvellous may no more dazzle the imaginations of those, who ought to be guided by truth alone! And would to God, the simplicity and the superstition of the people may never more contribute to support that authority, which some rash and dogmatical geniusses usurp! Truth should not borrow the arms of falshood to defend itself; nor virtue those of vice. Advantages should not be given to unbelievers and heretics, under pretence of opposing heresy and unbelief. We should render to God *a reasonable service*, Rom. xii. 1. we should be all *spiritual men, judging all things*, 1 Cor. ii. 15. according to the expression of the apostle. But I add no more on this article.

Hitherto we have spoken, if I may say so, to reason only, it is time now to speak to conscience. We have been preaching by arguments and syllogisms to the understanding, it is time now to preach by sentiments to the heart. Religion is not made for the mind alone, it is particularly addressed to the heart, and to the heart I would prove, that our Jesus hath accomplished, in the most sublime of all senses, this propheey in the text: *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given*, and so on. This is our second part.

II. The terms *throne, kingdom, government*, are metaphorical; when they are applied to God, to his Messiah, to the end, which religion proposeth, and to the felicity, which it procures. They are very imperfect, and, if I may venture to say so, very low and mean, when they are used to represent objects of such infinite grandeur. No, there is nothing sufficiently noble in the characters of the greatest kings, nothing wise enough in their maxims, nothing gentle enough in their government, nothing pompous enough in their courts, nothing sufficiently glorious in their exploits to represent fully the grandeur and glory of our Messiah.

Who is a king? What is a throne? Why have we masters? Why is sovereign power lodged in a few hands? and what determines mankind to lay aside their independence, and to lose their beloved liberty? The whole implies, my brethren, some mortifying truths. We have not knowledge sufficient to guide ourselves, and we need minds wiser than our own to inspect and to direct our conduct. We are indigent, and superior beings must supply our wants. We have enemies, and we must have guardians to protect us.

Miserable men! how have you been deceived in your expectations? What disorders could anarchy have produced, greater than those, which have sometimes proceeded from sovereign authority? You sought guides to direct you: but you have sometimes fallen under the tuition of men, who, far from being able to conduct a whole people, knew not how to guide themselves. You sought nursing fathers, to succour you in your indigence: but you have fallen sometimes into the hands of men, who had no other designs than to impoverish their people, to enrich themselves with the substance, and to fatten themselves with the blood of their subjects. You sought guardians to protect you from your enemies: but you have sometimes found executioners, who have used you with greater barbarity, than your most bloody enemies would have done.

But, all these melancholy truths apart, suppose the fine notions, which we form of kings and of royalty of sovereign power and of the hands that hold it, were realized: how incapable are kings, and how inadequate is their government, to the relief of the innumerable wants of an immortal soul! Suppose kings of the most tender sentiments, formidable in their armies, and abundant in their treasuries; could they heal the maladies, that afflict us here, or could they quench our painful thirst for felicity hereafter? Ye Cæsars! Ye Alexanders! Ye Trajans! Ye, who were, some of you, like Titus, the parents of your people, and the delights of mankind, ye thunderbolts of war! Ye idols of the world! What doth all your pomp avail me? Of what use to me are all your personal qualifications, and all your regal magnificence? Can you, Can they, dissipate the darkness, that envelopes me; calm the conscience, that accuses and torments me; reconcile me to God; free me from the controul of my commanding amd tyrannical passions; deliver me from death; and discover immortal happiness to me? Ye earthly gods! ignorant and wretched like me; objects like me of the displeasure

pleasure of God; like me exposed to the miseries of life; slaves to your passions like me; condemned like me to that frightful night in which death involveth all mankind; ye can relieve neither your own miseries nor mine!

Shew me a government, that supplies these wants: that is the empire I seek. Shew me a king, who will conduct me to the felicity, to which I aspire: such a king I long to obey. My brethren, this empire we are preaching to you: Such a king is the king Messiah. *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called,* WONDERFUL, because he is the substance and the centre of all the wondrous works of God.

But purify your imaginations, and do not always judge of man as if he were a being destitute of reason and intelligence. When we speak of man, do not conceive of a being of this present world only; a creature placed for a few days in human society, wanting nothing but food and raiment, and the comforts of a temporal life: but attend to your own hearts. In the sad circumstances, into which sin hath brought you, what are your most important wants? We have already insinuated them. You need knowledge; you need reconciliation with God; you want support through all the miseries of life; and you need consolation against the fear of death. Well! all these wants the king Messiah supplies. I am going to prove it, but I conjure you at the same time, not only to believe, but to act. I would, by publishing the design of the Saviour's incarnation, engage you to concur in it. By explaining to you the nature of his empire, I would fain teach you the duties of his subjects. By celebrating the glory of the king Messiah, I long to see it displayed among you in all its splendid magnificence.

You want *knowledge*. You will find it in the king Messiah. He is the COUNSELLOR. He is the *true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,* John i. 9. *In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,* Col. ii. 3. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon him, the Lord hath appointed him to preach good tidings unto the meek,* Isa. lxi. 1. The Spirit of the Lord rests upon him, the *spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord,* chap. xi. 2. He hath *the tongue of the learned,* chap. l. 4. and the wisdom of the wise. Ask him to explain to you the grand appearances of nature,

which exercise the speculations of the most transcendent geniusses, and absorb their defective reason, and all his answers will discover the most profound and perfect knowledge of them. Inquire of him whence all the visible creation came, the luminaries of heaven, and the magnificent treasures of the earth. Ask him to reveal to you the *God, who hideth himself*, Isa. xlv. 15. Ask him the cause of those endless disorders, which mix with that profusion of wisdom, which appears in the world. Ask him whence the blessings come, which we enjoy, and whence the calamities, that afflict us. Ask him what is the origin, the nature, the destiny, the end of man. Of all these articles the COUNSELLOR will tell you more than Plato, and Socrates, and all the philosophers, who only *felt after* the truth, Acts xvii. 27. who themselves discovered, and taught others to see, only a few rays of light darkened with prejudices and errors.

This is the first idea of the king Messiah; this is the first source of the duties of his subjects, and of the dispositions, with which they ought to celebrate his nativity, and with which alone they can celebrate it in a proper manner. To celebrate properly the festival of his nativity, truth must be esteemed; we must be desirous of attaining knowledge; we must come from the ends of the earth, like the wise men of the east, to contemplate the miracles, which the Messiah displays in the new world; like Mary, we must be all attention to receive the doctrine, that proceeds from his sacred mouth; like the multitude, we must follow him into deserts and mountains, to hear his admirable sermons. This is the first duty, which the festival, that you are to celebrate next Wednesday, demands. Prepare yourselves to keep it in this manner.

You want *reconciliation* with God, and this is the grand work of the king Messiah. He is THE PRINCE OF PEACE. He terminates the fatal war, which sin hath kindled between God and you, by obtaining the pardon of your past sins, and by enabling you to avoid the commission of sin for the future. He obtains the pardon of past sins for you. How can a merciful God resist the ardent prayers, which the Redeemer of mankind addresseth to him in behalf of those poor sinners, for whom he sacrificed himself? How can a merciful God resist the plea of the blood of his Son, which cries for mercy for the miserable posterity of Adam? As the king Messiah reconciles you to God, by obtaining the pardon

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of your past sin, so he reconciles you, by procuring strength to enable you to avoid it for time to come. Having calmed those passions which prevented your knowing what was right, and your loving what was lovely, he gave you laws of equity and love. How can you resist, after you have known him, the motives, on which his laws are founded? Every difficulty disappears, when examples so alluring are seen, and when you are permitted, under your most discouraging weaknesses, to approach the treasures of grace, which he hath opened to you, and to derive purity from its source. Doth gratitude know any difficulties? Is not every act of obedience easy to a mind animated by a love as vehement as that, which cannot but be felt for a Saviour, who in the tenderest manner hath loved us?

This is the second idea of the king Messiah, this is the second source of the duties of his subjects, and of the dispositions essential to a worthy celebration of the feast of his nativity. Come next Wednesday deeply sensible of the danger of having that God for your enemy, who holds your destiny in his mighty hands, and whose commands all creatures obey. Come with an eager desire of reconciliation to him. Come and hear the voice of *the Prince of Peace*, who publisheth *peace; peace to him that is near, and to him that is far off*, Isa. lvii. 19. While Moses mediates a covenant between God and the Israelites on the top of the holy mountain, let not Israel violate the capital article at the foot of it. While Jesus Christ is descending to reconcile you to God, do not declare war against God; insult him not by voluntary rebellions, after he hath voluntarily delivered you from the slavery of sin, under which you groaned. Return not again to those sins, which *separated between you and your God*, Isa. lix. 2. and which would do it again, though Jesus should become incarnate again, and should offer himself every day to expiate them.

You need *support under the calamities of this life*, and this also you will find in the king Messiah. He is THE MIGHTY GOD, and he will tell you, while you are suffering the heaviest temporal afflictions, although *the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed*, yet *my kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed*, chap. liv. 10. Under your severest tribulations, he will assure you, that *all things work together for good to them that love God*, Rom. viii. 28. He will teach you to shout victory under an apparent defeat, and to sing

sing this triumphant song, *Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ*, 2 Cor. ii. 14. *In all these things we are more than conquerors, through him who loved us*, Rom. viii. 37.

This is the third idea of the king Messiah, and this is the third source of the duties of his subjects, and of the dispositions which are necessary to the worthily celebrating of the festival of his nativity. Fall in, christian soul! with the design of thy Saviour, who, by elevating thy desires above the world, would elevate thee above all the catastrophes of it. Come, behold Messiah, the king, lodging in a stable, and lying in a manger: hear him saying to his disciples, *The foxes of holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the son of man hath not where to lay his head*, Matt. viii. 20. Learn from this example not to place thy happiness in the possession of earthly good. Die to the world, die to its pleasures, die to its pomps. Aspire after other ends, and nobler joys, than those of the children of this world, and then worldly vicissitudes cannot shake thy bliss.

Finally, You have need of one *to comfort you under the fears of death*, by opening the gates of eternal felicity to you, and by satiating your avidity of existence and elevation. This consolation the king Messiah affords. He is the *everlasting Father*, THE FATHER OF ETERNITY, *his throne shall be built up for all generations*, Psal. lxxxix. 4. he hath received *dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed*, Dan. vii. 14. and his subjects must reign eternally with him. When thou, christian! art confined to thy dying bed, he will approach thee with all the attractive charms of his power and grace: he will say to thee, *Fear not, thou worm Jacob*, Isa. xli. 14. he will whisper these comfortable words in thine ear, *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee: and when through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee*, chap. xliii. 2. He will open heaven to thee, as he opened it to St. Stephen; and he will say to thee, as he said to the converted thief, *To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise*, Luke xxiii. 43.

This is the fourth idea of the king Messiah, and this is the fourth source of the duties of his subjects. How glorious

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is the festival of his nativity! What grand, noble and sublime sentiments doth it require of us! The subjects of the king Messiah, the children of *the everlasting Father*, should consider the œconomy of time in its true point of view, they should compare *things which are seen, which are temporal*, with *things which are not seen, which are eternal*, 2 Cor. iv. 18. They should fix their attention upon the eternity, fill their imaginations with the glory, of the world to come, and learn, by just notions of immortality, to estimate the present life; the *declining shadow; the withering grass; the fading flower; the dream, that flyeth away; the vapour, that vanisheth*, and is irrecoverably lost, Psal. cii. 11. Isa. xl. 7. Job xx. 8. and James iv. 14.

These, my brethren, are the characters of your king Messiah, these are the characters of the divine child, whose birth you are to celebrate next Wednesday, and in these ways only can you celebrate it as it deserves. We conjure you by that adorable goodness, which we are going to testify to you again; we conjure you by that throne of grace, which God is about to ascend again; we conjure you by those ineffable mercies, which our imaginations cannot fully comprehend, which our minds cannot sufficiently admire, nor all the emotions of our hearts sufficiently esteem; we conjure you to look at, and, if you will pardon the expression, to lose yourselves in these grand objects; we conjure you not to turn our solemn festivals, and our devotional days, into seasons of gaming, irreligion, and dissipation. Let us submit ourselves to the king Messiah; let us engage ourselves to his government; let his dominion be the ground of all our joy.

O most mighty! thou art fairer than the children of men. Grace is poured into thy lips, therefore God hath blessed thee for ever! Psal. xlv. 3, 2. *The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion*, saying, *Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies! Thy people shall be willing in the day, when thou shalt assemble thy host in holy pomp* /* Yea, reign over thine enemies, great King! bow

* We retain the reading of the *French* Bible here; because our author paraphrases the passage after that version. *Ton peuple* sera un peuple plein *de franc vouloir au jour que tu assembleras ton armee en sa sainte pompe. Thy people* shall be *willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness*, &c. The passage seems to be a prophetical allusion to one of those solemn festi-

how their rebellious wills; prevent their fatal counsels; defeat all their bloody designs! Reign also over thy friends, reign over us! Make us *a willing people!* Assemble all this congregation, when thou shalt come with *thy host in holy pomp!* Let not the flying of the clouds, which will serve thee for a triumphal chariot; let not the pomp of the holy angels in thy train, when thou shalt come to *judge the world in righteousness,* Acts xvii. 31. let not these objects affright and terrify our souls: let them charm and transport us; and, instead of dreading thine approach, let us hasten it by our prayers and sighs! *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen.* To God be honour and glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

vals, in which conquerors, and their armies, on their return from battle, offered a part of their spoil, which they had taken from their enemies, to God, from whom the victory came. These *free-will* offerings were carried in grand procession. They were *holy*, because agreeable to the œconomy, under which the Jews lived, and they were *beautifully* holy, because they were not exacted, but proceeded from the *voluntary* gratitude of the *army*. In large conquests, the troops and the offerings were out of number, like the drops of such a shower of *dew*, as the *morning brought forth* in the *youth*, or *spring* of the year. See 2 Chron. xiv. 13, 14, 15. and xv. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. We have ventured this hint on a passage, which seems not very clear in our version.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

THE VARIETY OF OPINIONS ABOUT CHRIST.

MATTHEW xvi. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

When Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who, do men say, that I, the son of man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art *John the Baptist; some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who, say ye, that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, who is in heaven.*

IF any prejudice be capable of disconcerting a man's peace, it is that, which ariseth from observing the various opinions of mankind. We do not mean those which regard uninteresting objects. As we may mistake them without danger, so we may suppose, either that men have not sufficiently considered them, or that the Creator may, without injuring the perfections of his nature, refuse those assistances, which are necessary for the obtaining of a perfect knowledge of them. But how do the opinions of mankind vary about those subjects, which our whole happiness is concerned to know? One affirms, that the works of nature are the productions of chance: Another attributes them to a first cause, who created matter, regulated its form, and directed its motion. One says, that there is but one God, that it is absurd to suppose a plurality of Supreme Beings, and that to prove there is one is thereby to prove that there is but one: another

says, that the Divine Nature, being infinite, can communicate itself to many to an infinity, and form many infinites, all really perfect in their kind. Moreover, among men, who seem to agree in the essential points of religion, among christians, who bear the same denomination, assemble in the same places of worship, and subscribe the same creeds, ideas of the same articles very different, sometimes diametrically opposite, are discovered. As there are numerous opinions on matters of speculation, so there are endless notions about practice. One contents himself with half a system, containing only some general duties, which belong to worldly decency: Another insists on uniting virtue with every circumstance, every transaction, every instant, and, if I may be allowed to speak so, every indivisible point of life. One thinks it lawful to associate the pleasures of the world with the practice of piety; and he pretends that good people differ from the wicked only in some enormities, in which the latter seem to forget they are men, and to transform themselves into wild beasts: another condemns himself to perpetual penances and mortifications, and if, at any time, he allow himself recreations, they are never such as savour of the spirit of the times, because they are the livery of the world.

I said, my brethren, that if any prejudices make deep impressions on the mind of a rational man, they are those which are produced by a variety of opinions. They sometimes drive men into a state of uncertainty and scepticism, the worst disposition of mind, the most opposite to that persuasion, without which there is no pleasure, and the most contrary to the grand design of religion, which is to establish our consciences, and to enable us to reply to every inquirer on these great subjects, *I know, and am persuaded*, Rom. xiv. 14.

Against this temptation Jesus Christ guarded his disciples. Never was a question more important, never were the minds of men more divided about any question, than that, which related to the person of our Saviour. Some considered him as a politician, who, under a veil of humility, hid the most ambitious designs: others took him for an enthusiast. Some thought him an emissary of the devil: others an envoy from God. Even among them, who agreed in the latter, *some said that he was Elias, some John the Baptist, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.* The faith of the apostles was in danger of being shaken by these divers opinions.

opinions. Jesus Christ comes to their assistance, and, having required their opinions on a question, which divided all Judea, having received from Peter the answer of the whole apostolical college, he praiseth their faith, and, by praising it, gave it a firmer establishment.

My brethren, may the words of Jesus Christ make everlasting impressions on you! May those of you, who, because you have acted rationally by embracing the belief, and by obeying the precepts of the gospel, are sometimes taxed with superstition, sometimes with infatuation, and sometimes with melancholy, learn from the reflections, that we shall make on the text, to rise above the opinions of men, to be firm and immoveable amidst temptations of this kind, always faithfully to adhere to truth and virtue, and to be the disciples only of them. Grant, O Lord! that they, who like St. Peter have said to Jesus Christ, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*, may experience such pleasure as the answer of the divine Saviour gave to the apostle's soul, when he said, *Bleseed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* Amen.

The questions and the answers, which are related in the text, will be our only divisions of this discourse.

Jesus Christ was travelling from Bethany to Cesarea, not to that Cesarea, which was situated on the Mediterranean sea, at first called the tower of Strato, and afterwards Cesarea, by Herod the Great, in honour of the emperor Augustus: but to that which was situated at the foot of mount Lebanon, and which had been repaired and embellished, in honour of Tiberius, by Philip the Tetrarch, the son of Herod.

Jesus Christ, in his way to this city, put this question to his disciples, *Who, do men say, that I, the son of man, am?* or, as it may be rendered, *Who, do men say, I am? Do they say, I am the son of man?*

We will not enter into a particular examination of the reasons, which determined the Jews of our Saviour's time, and the inspired writers with them, to distinguish the Messiah by the title *son of man*. Were we to determine any thing on this subject, we should give the preference to the opinion of those, who think the phrase *son of man* means *man* by excellence. The Jews say *son of man* to signify *a man*. Witness, among many other passages, this well-known saying of Balaam: *God is not a man, that he should lie,*

neither the son of man, that he should repent, Numb. xxiii. 19. The Messiah is called *the man*, or *the son of man*, that is, *the man*, of whom the prophecies had spoken, *the man*, whose coming was the object of the desires and prayers of the whole church.

It is more important to inquire the design of Jesus Christ, in putting this question to his disciples, *Who, do men say, that I am?* It is one of those questions, the meaning of which can be determined only by the character of him, who proposeth it; for it may be put from many different motives.

Sometimes *pride* puts this question. There are some people, who think of nothing but themselves, and who imagine all the world think about them too: they suppose, they are the subject of every conversation: and fancy every wheel, which moves in society, hath some relation to them, if they be not the principal spring of it. People of this sort are very desirous of knowing what is said about them, and, as they have no conception that any but glorious things are said of them, they are extremely solicitous to know them, and often put this question, *Who, do men say, that I am?* Would you know what they say of you? Nothing at all. They do not know you exist, and, except a few of your relations, nobody in the world knows you are in it.

The question is sometimes put by *curiosity*, and this motive deserves commendation, if it be accompanied with a desire of reformation. The judgment of the public is respectable, and, to a certain degree, it ought to be a rule of action to us. It is necessary sometimes to go abroad, to quit our relations, and acquaintances, who are prejudiced in our favour, and to inform ourselves of the opinions of those, who are more impartial, on our conduct. I wish some people would often put this question, *Who, do men say, that I am?* The answers they would receive would teach them to entertain less flattering, and more just notions of themselves. *Who, do men say, that I am?* They say, you are haughty, and proud of your prosperity; that you use your influence only to oppress the weak; that your success is a public calamity; and that you are a tyrant whom every one abhors. *Who, do men say, that I am?* They say, you have a serpent's tongue, that *the poison of adders is under your lips*, Psal. cxl. 3. that you inflame a whole city, a whole province, by the scandalous tales you forge;

forge, and which having forged, you industriously propagate; they say, you are infernally diligent in sowing discord between wife and husband, friend and friend, subject and prince, pastor and flock. *Who, do men say, that I am?* They say, you are a sordid covetous wretch; that mammon is the God you adore; that, provided your coffers fill, it is a matter of indifference to you, whether it be by extortion, or by just acquisition, whether it be by a lawful inheritance or by an accursed patrimony.

Revenge, may put the question, *Who, do men say, that I am?* We cannot but know that some reports, which are spread about us, are disadvantageous to our reputation. We are afraid, justice should not be done to us, we therefore wish to know our revilers in order to mark them out for vengeance. The inquiry in this disposition is certainly blameable. Let us live uprighty, and let us give ourselves no trouble about what people say of us. If there be some cases in which it is useful to know the popular opinion, there are others in which it is best to be ignorant of it. If religion forbids us to avenge ourselves, prudence requires us not to expose ourselves to the temptation of doing it. A heathen hath given us an illustrious example of this prudent conduct, which I am recommending to you: I speak of Pompey the Great. He had defeated Perpenna, and the traitor offered to deliver to him the papers of Sertorius, among which were letters from several of the most powerful men in Rome, who had promised to receive Sertorius into Italy, and to put all to death, who should attempt to resist him. Pompey took all the papers, burnt all the letters, by that mean prevented all the bloody consequences, which would have followed such fatal discoveries, and, along with them, sacrificed that passion, which many, who are called christians, find the most difficult to sacrifice, I mean revenge.

But this question, *Who do men say, that I am?* may be put by *benevolence*. The good of society requires each member to entertain just notions of some persons. A magistrate, who acts disinterestedly for the good of the state, and for the support of religion, would be often distressed in his government, if he were represented as a man devoted to his own interest, cruel in his measures, and governed by his own imperious tempers. A pastor, who knoweth and preacheth the truth, who hath the power of alarming hardened sinners, and of exciting the fear of hell in them, in order

der to prevent their falling into it, or, shall I rather say, in order to draw them out of it: Such a pastor will discharge the duties of his office with incomparably more success, if the people do him justice, than if they accuse him of fomenting errors, and of loving to surround his pulpit with *devouring fire and everlasting burnings*, Isai. xxxiii. 14. Benevolence may incline such persons to inquire what is said of them, in order to rectify mistakes, which may be very injurious to those who believe them. In this disposition Jesus Christ proposed the question in the text to his disciples. Benevolence directed all the steps of our Saviour, it dictated all his language, it animated all his emotions; and, when we are in doubt about the motive of any part of his conduct, we shall seldom run any hazard, if we attribute it to his benevolence. In our text he established the faith of his disciples by trying it. He did not want to be told the public opinions about himself, he knew them better than they, of whom he inquired: but he required his disciples to relate people's opinions, that he might give them an antidote against the poison that was enveloped in them.

The disciples answered; *Some say thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets.* They omitted those odious opinions, which were injurious to Jesus Christ, and refused to defile their mouths with the execrable blasphemies, which the malignity of the Jews uttered against him. But with what shadow of appearance could it be thought that Jesus Christ was John the Baptist? You may find, in part, an answer to this question in the fourteenth chapter of this gospel, ver. 1—10 It is there said, that Herod Antipas, called the Tetrarch, that is, the king of the fourth part of his father's territories, beheaded John the Baptist at the request of Herodias.

Every body knows the cause of the hatred of that fury against the holy man. John the Baptist held an opinion, which now a days passeth for an error, injurious to the peace of society, that is, that the high rank of those, who are guilty of some scandalous vices, ought not to shelter them from the censures of the ministers of the living God; and that they who commit, and not they who reprove, such crimes are responsible for all the disorders, which such censures may produce in society. A bad courtier, but a good servant of him, who hath sent him to *prepare the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight*, Luke iii. 4. he told the incestuous Herod, without equivocating, *It is not lawful*

ful for thee to have thy brother Philip's wife, Matt. xiv. 4. Herodias could not plead her cause with equity, and therefore she pleaded it with cruelty. Her daughter Salome had pleased Herod at a feast, which was made in the castle of Macheron, on the birth-day of the king. He showed the same indulgence to her, that Flaminius the Roman showed to a court lady, who requested that consul to gratify her curiosity with the sight of beheading a man. An indulgence, certainly, less shocking in a heathen, than in a prince educated in the knowledge of the true God. It was a common opinion among the Jews, that the resurrection of the martyrs was anticipated. Many thought all the prophets were to be raised from the dead at the coming of the Messiah, and some had spread a report, which reached Herod, that John the Baptist enjoyed that privilege.

The same reasons, which persuaded some Jews to believe, that he, whom they called Jesus, was John the Baptist risen from the dead, persuaded others to believe, that he was some *one of the prophets*, who, like John, had been put to a violent death, for having spoken with a similar courage against the reigning vices of the times, in which they lived. This was particularly the case of Jeremiah. When this prophet was only fourteen years of age, and, as he said of himself, when he could *not speak*, because he was *a child*, Jer. i. 6. he delivered himself with a freedom of speech, that is hardly allowable in those, who are grown gray in a long discharge of the ministerial office. He censured, without distinction of rank, or character, the vices of all the Jews, and, having executed this painful function from the reign of Josiah, to the reign of Zedekiah, he was, if we believe a tradition of the Jews, which Tertulian, St. Jerom, and many fathers of the church have preserved, stoned to death at Tahapanes in Egypt by his countrymen: there he fell a victim to their rage againt his predictions. The fact is not certain, however, it is admitted by many christians, who have pretended that St. Paul had the prophet Jeremiah particularly in view, when he proposed, as examples to christians, some, who *were stoned*, Heb. xi. 37. whom he placeth among the *cloud of witnesses*, or, as the words are in the original, among the *cloud of martyrs*, ver. 1. However uncertain this history of the prophet's lapidation may be, some Jews believed it, and it was sufficient to persuade them that Jesus Christ was Jeremiah.

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As Elias was translated to heaven without dying, the opinions, of which we have been speaking, were not sufficient to persuade other Jews, that Jesus Christ was Elias: but a mistaken passage of Malachi was the ground of this notion. It is the passage, which concludes the writings of that prophet; *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord,* Mal. iii. 5. This prophecy was perfectly plain to the disciples of Jesus Christ, for, in him, and in John the Baptist, they saw its accomplishment. But the Jews understood it literally. They understand it so still, and, next to the coming of the Messiah, that of Elias is the grand object of their hopes. It is Elias, according to them, who *will turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,* ver. 6. It is Elias, who will prepare the ways of the Messiah, will be his forerunner, and will anoint him with holy oil. It is Elias, who will answer all questions, and solve all difficulties. It is Elias, who will obtain by his prayers the resurrection of the just. It is Elias, who will do for the dispersed Jews what Moses did for the Israelites enslaved in Egypt; he will march at their head, and conduct them to Canaan. All these expressions are taken from the Rabbies, whose names I omit, as well as the titles of the books, from which I have quoted the passages now mentioned.

Such were the various opinions of the Jews about Jesus Christ; and each continued in his own prejudice, without giving himself any further trouble about it. But how could they remain in a state of tranquillity, while questions of such importance remained in dispute? All their religion, all their hopes, and all their happiness, depended on the ecclairissement of this problem, Who is the man, about whom the opinions of mankind are so divided? The questions, strictly speaking, were these, Is the Redeemer of Israel come? Are the prophecies accomplished? Is the Son of God among us, and hath he brought with him peace, grace, and glory? What kind of beings were the Jews, who left these great questions undetermined, and lived without elucidating them? Are you surprized at these things, my brethren? Your indolence on questions of the same kind is equally astonishing to considerate men. The Jews had business, they must have neglected it; they loved pleasures and amusements, they must have suspended them; they were stricken with whatever

over concerned the present life, and they must have sought after the life to come, they must have shaken off that idleness in which they spent their lives, and have taken up the cross and followed Jesus Christ. These were the causes of that indolence, which surprizeth you, and these were the causes of that ignorance, which concealed Jesus Christ from them, till he made himself known to them by the just though bloody calamities, which he inflicted on their nation. And these are also the causes of that ignorance, in which the greater part of you are involved, in regard to many questions as important as those which were agitated then. Will a few acts of faith in God, and of love to him, assure us of our salvation, or must these acts be continued, repeated and established? Doth faith consist in barely believing the merit of the Saviour, or doth it include an entire obedience to his laws? Is the fortune, that I enjoy with so much pleasure, display with so much parade, or hide with so much niggardliness, really mine, or doth it belong to my country, to my customers, to the poor, or to any others, whom my ancestors have deceived, from whom they have obtained, and from whom I withhold it? Doth my course of life lead to heaven, or to hell? Shall I be numbered with *the spirits of just men made perfect*, Heb. xii. 23. after I have finished my short life, or shall I be plunged with devils into eternal flames? My God! how is it possible for men quietly to eat, drink, sleep, and, as they call it, amuse themselves, while these important questions remain unanswered! But, as I said of the Jews, we must neglect our business; suspend our pleasures; cease to be dazzled with the present, and employ ourselves about the future world: perhaps also we must make a sacrifice of some darling passion; abjure some old opinion; or restore some acquisition, which is dearer to us than the truths of religion, and the salvation of our souls. Woe be to us! Let us no more reproach the Jews; the causes of their indolence are the causes of ours. Ah! let us take care, lest, like them, we continue in ignorance, till the vengeance of God command death, and devils, and hell, to *awake* us with them *to everlasting shame*, Dan. xii. 2.

Jesus Christ, having heard from the mouths of his apostles what people thought of him, desired also to hear from their own mouths, (we have assigned the reasons before,) what they themselves thought of him. *He saith unto them, But who, say ye, that I am?* Peter instantly replied for

himself, and for the whole apostolical college, *Thou, art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

St. Peter was a man of great vivacity, and people of this cast are subject to great mistakes: as ready to speak as to think, they often fall into mistakes through the same principle, that inclines them to embrace the truth, and to maintain it. St. Peter's history often exemplifies this remark. Doth he hear Jesus Christ speak of his approaching death? *Lord*, says he, *spare thyself, this shall not be to thee*, Matt. xvi. 22. Doth he see a few rays of celestial glory on the holy mount? He is stricken with their splendor, and exclaims, *Lord it is good for us to be here*, chap. xvii. 4. Doth he perceive Jesus Christ in the hands of his enemies? He draws a sword to deliver him, and cuts off the ear of Malchus. But, if this vivacity expose a man to great inconveniences, it is also accompanied with some fine advantages. When a man of this disposition attends to virtue, he makes infinitely greater proficiency in it, than those slow men do, who pause, and weigh, and argue out all step by step: the zeal of the former is more ardent, their flames are more vehement, and after they are more wise by their mistakes, they are patterns of piety. St. Peter, on this occasion, proves beforehand all we have advanced. He feels himself animated with a holy jealousy in regard to them, who partake with him the honour of apostleship, and it would mortify him, could he think, that any one of the apostolical college hath more zeal for a master, to whom he hath devoted his heart, and his life, all his faculty of loving, and all the powers of his soul: he looks, he sparkles, and he replies, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

Thou art the Christ, or, thou art the Messiah, the king promised to the church. He calls this king *the Son of God: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* The Jews gave the Messiah this title, which was an object of their hopes. Under this idea the prophecies had promised him, *the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee*, Psal. ii. 7. God himself conferred this title on Jesus Christ from heaven, *This is my beloved Son*, Matt. iii. 17. Under this idea the angel promised him to his holy mother, *Thou shalt bring forth a Son, he shall be great, and shall be called, The Son of the Highest*, Luke i. 31, 32. They are two very different questions, I grant, Whether the Jewish church acknowledged that the Messiah

Messiah should be *the Son of God;* and whether they knew all the import of this august title. It cannot, however, be reasonably doubted, methinks, whether they discovered his dignity, although they might not know the doctrine of Christ's divinity so clearly, nor receive it with so much demonstration, as christians have received it. I should digress too far from my subject, were I to quote all the passages from the writings of the Jews, which learned men have collected on this article. Let it suffice to remark, that, if it could be proved that the Jewish church affixed only confused ideas to the title *Son of God*, which is given to the Messiah, it is beyond a doubt, I think, that the apostles affixed clear ideas to the terms, and that, in their style, *God* and *Son of God*, are synonimous: witness, among many other passages, St. Thomas's adoration of Jesus Christ, expressed in these words, *My Lord and my God.*

Let us not engage any further in this controversy now; let us improve the precious moments, which remain, to the principal design, that we proposed in the choice of the subject, that is to guard you against the temptations, which arise from that variety of opinions, which are received both in the world, and in the church, on the most important points of religion. The comparison we are going to make of St. Peter's confession of faith with the judgment of Jesus Christ on it, will conduct us to this end.

Jesus Christ assured St. Peter, that the confession of faith, which he then made, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*, was not a production of frail and corrupted nature, or, as he expresseth it, That *flesh and blood had not revealed these things unto him. Flesh and blood* mean here, as in many other passages, which we have quoted at other times, frail and corrupted nature. Jesus Christ assured St. Peter, that this confession was a production of grace, which had operated in him, and which would conduct him to the supreme good. This is the meaning of these words, *My Father, who is in heaven, hath revealed these things unto thee.* What characters of the faith of St. Peter, occasioned the judgment, that Jesus Christ made of it? And how may we know whether our faith be of the same divine original? Follow us in these reflections. *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, flesh and blood hath not* produced the faith, that thou hast professed, but *my Father, who is in heaven, hath revealed it to thee.* In order to convince thee of the truth of my assertions, consider, first, the circumstances,

which Providence hath improved to produce thy faith: secondly, the efforts which preceded it: thirdly, the evidence that accompanies it: fourthly, the sacrifices, which seal, and crown it: and lastly, the nature of the very frailties, which subsists with it. Let us explain these five characters, and let us make an application of them. Let us know St. Peter; or, rather, let us learn to know ourselves. With this, the most important point, we will conclude this discourse.

1. Let us attend to *the circumstances*, which Providence had improved to the producing of St. Peter's faith. There are, in the lives of christians, certain signal circumstances, in which we cannot help perceiving a particular hand of Providence working for their salvation. Mistakes on this article may produce, and foment, superstitious sentiments. We have in general, a secret biass to fanaticism. We often meet with people, who imagine themselves the central point of all the designs of God; they think, he watcheth only over them, and that, in all the events in the universe, he hath only their felicity in view. Far from us be such extravagant notions. It is, however, strictly true, that there are in the lives of christians some signal circumstances, in which we cannot help seeing a particular providence working for their salvation. Of whom can this be affirmed more evidently than of the apostles? They, by an inestimable privilege, were not only witnesses of the life of Jesus Christ, hearers of his doctrine, and spectators of his miracles: but they were admitted to an intimacy with him; they had the liberty at all times, and in all places, to converse with him, to propose their doubts, and to ask for his instructions; they were at the source of wisdom, truth and life. St. Peter had these advantages not only in common with the rest of the apostles: but he, with James and John, were chosen from the rest of the apostles to accompany the Saviour, when, on particular occasions, he laid aside the vails, which concealed him from the rest, and when he displayed his divinity in its greatest glory. A faith produced in such extraordinary circumstances, was not the work of flesh and blood, it was a production of that almighty grace, that ineffable love, which wrought the salvation of St. Peter.

My brethren, although we have never enjoyed the same advantages with St. Peter: yet, it seems to me, those whom God hath established in piety, may recollect the manner, in which he hath improved some circumstances to form the dispositions

positions in them, that constitute it. Let each turn his attention to the different conditions through which God hath been pleased to conduct him. Here I was exposed to such or such a danger, and delivered from it by a kind of miracle; there, I fell into such or such a temptation, from which I was surprizingly recovered; in such a year, I was connected with a baneful company, from which an unexpected event freed me; at another time, I met with a faithful friend, the most valuable of all acquisitions, whose kind advice, and assistance, recommended by his own example, were of infinite use to me: some of these dangerous states would have ruined me, if the projects, on which I was most passionately bent, had succeeded according to my wishes, for they were excited by worldly objects, and I was infatuated with their glory; and others would have produced the same effect, if my adverse circumstances had either increased or continued. I repeat it again, my brethren, each of us may recollect circumstances in his life, in which a kind providence evidently interposed, and made use of them to tear him from the world, and thereby enabled him to adopt this comfortable declaration of Jesus Christ, *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven.*

2. Let us remark *the efforts* which preceded faith. God hath been pleased to conceal the truth under vails, in order to excite our arduous industry to discover it. The obscurity, that involves it for a time, is not only agreeable to the general plan of providence: but it is one of the most singularly beautiful dispensations of it. If, then, you have attended to the truth only in a careless indolent manner, instead of studying it with avidity, it is to be feared, you have not obtained it: at least, it may be presumed, your attachment to it is less the work of heaven than of the world. But if you can attest, you have silenced prejudice to hear reason; you have consulted nature to know the God of nature; that, disgusted with the little progress you could make in that way, you have had recourse to revelation; and that you have stretched your meditation, not only to ascertain the truth of the gospel, but to obtain a deep, thorough knowledge of it; that you have considered this as the most important work, to which your attention could be directed; that you have sincerely and ardently implored the assistance of God to enable you to succeed in your endeavours; that you have often knocked at the door of mercy to obtain it; and that you have

have often adopted the sentiments, with the prayer of David, and said, *Lord! open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law!* Psal. cxix. 18. If you can appeal to heaven for the truth of these practices, be you assured, your faith, like St. Peter's, is not a production of flesh and blood, but a work of that grace, which never refuseth itself to the sighs of a soul, seeking it with so much vehement desire.

3. *The evidence,* that accompanies faith, is our next article. People may sincerely deceive themselves: indeed, erroneous opinions are generally received on account of some glimmerings that hover around them, and dazzle the beholders. The belief of an error seems, in some cases, to be grounded on principles as clear as those of truth. It is certain, however, that truth hath a brightness peculiar to itself; an evidence, that distinguisheth it from whatever is not true. The persuasion of a man, who rests on demonstration, is altogether different from that of him, who is seduced by sophisms. Evidence hath its prerogatives and its rights. Maintain who will, not only with sincerity, but with all the positiveness and violence, of which he is capable, that there is nothing certain; I am fully persuaded that I have evidence, incomparably clearer, of the opposite opinion. In like manner, when I affirm that I have an intelligent soul, and that I animate a material body; when I maintain that I am free, that the Creator hath given me the power of turning my eyes to the east, or to the west; that while the Supreme Being on whom I own, I am entirely dependant, shall please to continue me in my present state, I may look to the east, or to the west, as I choose, without being forced by any superior power to turn my eyes toward one of these points, rather than towards the other: when I admit these propositions, I find myself guided by a brightness of evidence, which it is impossible to find in the opposite propositions. A sophist may invent some objections, which I cannot answer; but he can never produce reasons, that counterbalance those which determine me: he may perplex, but he can never persuade me. In like manner an infidel may unite every argument in favour of a system of infidelity; a Turk may accumulate all his imaginations in support of Mohammedism; a Jew may do the same for Judaism; and they may silence me, but they can never dissuade me from christianity. The religion of Jesus Christ hath peculiar proof. The brightness of that evidence, which guides the

faith

faith of a christian, is a guarantee of the purity of the principle, from which it proceeds.

4. Observe *the sacrifices*, that crown the faith of a christian. There are two sorts of these: the one comprehends some valuable possessions; the other some tyrannical passions. Religion requires sacrifices of the first kind in times of persecution, when the most indispensible duties of a christian are punished as atrocious crimes; when men under pretence of religion, let loose their rage againt them, who sincerely love religion, and when, to use our Saviour's style, they think, *to do service to God*, John xvi. 2. by putting the disciples of Christ to death. Happy they! who, among you, my brethren, have been able to make sacrifices of this kind! You bear, I see, the marks of the disciples of a crucified Saviour; I respect the cross you carry, and I venerate your wounds. Yet, these are doubtful evidences of that faith, which the grace of our heavenly Father produceth. Sometimes, they even proceed from a disinclination to sacrifices of the second kind. Infatuation hath made confessors; vain glory hath produced martyrs; and there is a phœnomenon in the church, the cross of casuists, and the most insuperable objection against the doctrines of assurance and perseverance; that is, there are men, who, after they have resisted the greatest trials, yield to the least; men, who, having at first fought like heroes, at last fly like cowards; who, after they have prayed for their persecutors, for those, who confined them in dungeons, who, to use the Psalmist's language, *plowed upon their backs, and made long their furrows*, Psalm cxxix. 3. could not prevail with themselves on the eve of a Lord's-supper-day to forgive a small offence, committed by a brother, by one of the houshold of faith. There have been men, who, after they had resisted the tortures of the rack, fell into the silly snares of voluptuousness. There have been men, who, after they had forsaken all their ample fortunes, and rich revenues, were condemned for invading the property of a neighbour, for the sake of a trifling sum, that bore no proportion to that, which they had quitted for the sake of religion. O thou *deceitful, and desperately wicked heart of man!* O thou *heart of man! who can know thee!* Jer. xvii. 9. Yet study thy heart, and thou wilt know it. Search out the principle, from which thine actions flow: Content not thyself with a superficial self-examination; and thou wilt find, that want of courage to make a sacrifice of the

the last kind is sometimes that which produceth a sacrifice of the first.

One passion indemnifies us for the sacrifice of another. But to resign a passion, the resignation of which no other passion requires; to become humble without indemnifying pride by courting the applause, that men sometimes give to humility: to renounce pleasure without any other pleasure than that of pleasing the Creator; to make it our *meat and drink*, according to the language of scripture, *to do the will of God; to deny one's self; to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts; to present the body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God*, John iv. 34. Matt. xvii. 24. Gal. v. 24. and Rom. xii. 1. these are the characters of that faith, which flesh cannot produce; *That, which is born of the flesh, is flesh*. John iii. 6. but a faith, which sacrificeth the flesh itself, is a production of the grace of the *Father, which is in heaven*.

5. To conclude, St. Peter's faith hath a fifth character, which he could not well discover in himself, before he had experienced his own frailty, but which we, who have a complete history of his life, may very clearly discern. I ground the happiness of St. Peter, and the idea, I form of his faith, on the very nature of his fall. Not that we ought to consider sin as an advantage, nor that we adopt the maxim of those, who put sin among the *all things* which *work together for good to them that love God*, Rom. viii. 28. Ah! if sin be an advantage, may I be for ever deprived of such an advantage! May a constant peace between my Creator and me for ever place me in a happy incapacity of knowing the pleasure of reconciliation with him! It is true, however, that we may judge by the nature of the falls of good men of the sincerity of their faith, and that the very obstacles, which the remainder of corruption in them opposeth to their happiness, are, properly understood, proofs of the unchangeableness of their felicity.

St. Peter fell into great sin, after he had made the noble confession in the text. St. Peter committed one of those atrocious crimes, which terrify the conscience, trouble the joy of salvation, and which, sometimes, confound the elect with the reprobate. Of the same Jesus, to whom St. Peter said in the text, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*, and elsewhere, *We believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God*; of the same Jesus he afterwards said, *I know not the man*, John vi. 69. and

Matt.

Matt. xxvi. 72. You know not the man! And who, then, did you say, had the *words of eternal life?* You know not the man! And whom have you followed, and whom did you declare to be *the Son of the living God?* Notwithstanding this flagrant crime; notwithstanding this denial, the scandal of all ages, and an eternal monument of human weakness; in spite of this crime, the salvation of St. Peter was sure; St. Peter was the object of the promise, *Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not,* Luke xxii. 31, 32. And *Blessed art though, Simon Barjona,* was not only true, but infallible. The very nature of his fall proves it. Certain struggles, which precede the commission of sin; a certain infelicity, that is felt during the commission of it; above all, certain horrors which follow, an inward voice that cries, Miserable wretch! what hast thou done? A certain hell, if I may venture so to express myself, a certain hell, the flames of which divine love alone can kindle; characterize the falls, of which I speak.

This articles is for you, poor sinners! who are so hard to be persuaded of the mercy of God towards you; who imagine, the Deity sits on a tribunal of vengeance, surrounded with thunder and lightning, ready to strike your guilty heads. Such a faith as St. Peter's never fails. When, by examining your own hearts and the histories of your own lives, you discover the characters, which we have described, you may assure yourselves, that all the powers of hell united against your salvation can never prevent it. Cursed be the man, who abuseth this doctrine! Cursed be the man, who poisoneth this part of christian divinity! Cursed be the man, who reasoneth in this execrable manner! St. Peter committed an atrocious crime, in an unguarded moment, when reason, troubled by a revolution of the senses, had lost the power of reflection: I therefore risque nothing by committing sin coolly and deliberately. St. Peter disguised his christianity for a moment, when the danger of losing his life made him lose sight of the reasons, that induce people to confess their christianity: then I may disguise mine for thirty or forty years together, and teach my family to act the same hypocritical part; then I may live thirty or forty years, without a church, without sacraments, without public worship; when I have an opportunity, I may loudly exclaim, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;* and when that confession would injure my interest, or ha-

gard my fortune, or my life, I hold myself always in readiness to cry as loudly, *I know not the man*. I may abjure that religion, which Jesus Christ preached, which my fathers sealed with their blood, and for which *a cloud of witnesses*, Heb. xii. 1. my contemporaries, and my brethren, went, some into banishment, others into dungeons, some to the gallies, and others to the stake. Cursed be the man, who reasoneth in this execrable manner. *Ah! how shall I bless, whom God hath not blessed.*

I repeat it again, such a faith as St. Peter's never fails, and the very nature of the falls of such a believer proves the sincerity, and the excellence of his faith. We would not wish to have him banished entirely from his soul that fear, which the scriptures praise, and to which they attribute grand effects. A christian, an established christian I mean, ought to live in perpetual vigilance, he ought always to have these passages in his mind, *Be not high-minded, but fear. Hold that fast, which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, shall he live? All his righteousness, that he hath done, shall not be mentioned, in his sin he shall die*, Rom. xii. 20. Rev. iii. 11. and Ezek. xviii. 24. From these scriptures, such a christian, as I have described, will not infer consequences against the certainty of his salvation: but consequences directly contrary; and there is a degree of perfection, which enables a christian soldier, even in spite of some momentary repulses in wars to sing this triumphant song, *Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? In all things, I am more than conqueror, through him that loved me! Thanks be unto God, who always causeth me to triumph in Christ!* Rom. viii. 35, 37. and 2 Cor. ii. 14.

O! how amiable, my brethren, is christianity! How proportional to the wants of men! O! how delightful to recollect its comfortable doctrines, in those sad moments, in which sin appears, after we have fallen into it, in all its blackness and horror! How delightful to recollect its comfortable doctrines in those distressing periods, in which a guilty conscience driveth us to the verge of hell, holdeth us on the brink of the precipice, and obligeth us to hear those terrifying exclamations, which arise from the bottom of the abyss; *The fearful, the unbelieving, the abominable, whoremongers, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone!* Rev. xxi. 8. How happy then to be able to say, I have sinned indeed! I have

I have repeatedly committed the crimes, which plunge men into *the lake, that burneth with fire and brimstone!* I have repeatedly been fearful, and unclean! perhaps I may be so again! Perhaps I may forget all the resolutions I have made to devote myself for ever to God! Perhaps I may violate my solemn oaths to my sovereign Lord! Perhaps I may again deny my Redeemer! Perhaps, should I be again tried with the sight of scaffolds and stakes, I might again say, *I know not the man!* But yet, I know I love him! Nothing, I am sure, will ever be able to eradicate my love to him! I know, if I *love him*, it is *because he first loved me*, 1 John iv. 19 and I know, that he, *having loved his own, who are in the world, loved them unto the end*, John xiii. 1.

O my God! What would become of us without a religion, that preached such comfortable truths to us! Let us devote ourselves for ever to this religion, my brethren. The more it strengthens us against the horrors, which sin inspires, the more let us endeavour to surmount them by resisting sin. May you be adorned with these holy dispositions, my brethren! May you be admitted to the eternal pleasures, which they procure, and may each of you be able to apply to himself the declaration of Jesus Christ to St. Peter, *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, who is in heaven.* God grant you these blessings! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON V.

THE LITTLE SUCCESS OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY.

ROMANS X. 21.

All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

THE object, that St. Paul presents to our view in the text, makes very different impressions on the mind, according to the different sides on which it is viewed. If we consider it in itself, it is a prodigy, a prodigy which confounds reason, and shakes faith. Yes, when we read the history of Christ's ministry; when the truth of the narrations of the evangelists is proved beyond a doubt; when we transport ourselves back to the primitive ages of the church, and see, with our own eyes, the virtues, and the miracles, of Jesus Christ; we cannot believe, that the holy Spirit puts the words of the text into the mouth of the Saviour of the world: *All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.* It should seem, if Jesus Christ had displayed so many virtues, and operated so many miracles, there could not have been one infidel; not one Jew, who could have refused to embrace christianity, nor one libertine, who could have refused to have become a good man: one would think, all the synagogue must have fallen at the foot of Jesus Christ, and have desired an admission into his church.

But when, after we have considered the unsuccessfulness of Christ's ministry in itself, we consider it in relation to the ordinary conduct of mankind, we find nothing striking, nothing astonishing, nothing contrary to the common course of

of events. An obstinate resistance of the strongest motives, the tenderest invitations, interests the most important, and demonstrations the most evident, is not, we perceive, an unheard of thing: and, instead of breaking out into vain exclamations, and crying, *O times! O manners!* We say with the wise man, *That, which is done, is that, which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun,* Eccles. i. 9.

I have insensibly laid out, my brethren, the plan of this discourse. I design first, to shew you the unsuccessfulness of Christ's ministry as a prodigy, as an eternal opprobrium to the nation, in which he exercised it. And I intend, secondly, to remove your astonishment, after I have excited it; and, by making a few reflections on you, yourselves, to produce in you a conviction, yea perhaps a preservation, of a certain uniformity of corruption, which we cannot help attributing to all places, and to all times.

O God! by my description of the infidelity of the ancient Jews to-day, confirm us in the faith! May the portraits of the depravity of our times, which I shall be obliged to exhibit to this people, in order to verify the sacred history of the past, inspire us with as much contrition on account of our own disorders, as astonishment at the disorders of the rest of mankind! Great God! animate our meditations to this end with thy holy Spirit. May this people, whom thou dost cultivate in the tenderest manner, be an exception to the too general corruption of the rest of the world! Amen.

I. Let us consider the unbelief of the Jews as a prodigy of hardness of heart, an eternal shame and opprobrium to the Jewish nation, and let us spend a few moments in lamenting it. We have supposed, that the text speaks of their infidelity. Christians who regard the authority of St. Paul, will not dispute it; for the apostle employs three whole chapters of his epistle to the Romans, the ninth, the tenth, and the eleventh, to remove the objections, which the casting off of the Jews might raise against christianity, among those of that nation, who had embraced the gospel.

One of the most weighty arguments which he useth to remove this stumbling-block, is the prediction of their unbelief in their prophecies; and among other prophecies, which he alledgeth, is my text, quoted from the sixty-fifth of Isaiah.

It

It is worthy of observation, that all the other passages which the apostle cites on this occasion from the prophets, were taken by the ancient Jews in the same sense that the apostle gives them. This may be proved from the Talmud. I do not know a more absurd book than the Talmud: but one is, in some sort, repaid for the fatigue of turning it over by an important discovery, so to speak, which every page of that book makes; that is, that whatever pains the Jews have been at to enervate the arguments which we have taken from the theology of their ancestors, they themselves cannot help preserving proofs of their truth. I would compare, on this article, the Talmud of the Jews with the mass-book of the church of Rome. Nothing can be more opposite to the doctrine of the gospel, and to that of the reformation, than the Romish missal: yet we discover in it some traces of the doctrine of the primitive church; and although a false turn is given to much of the ancient phraseology, yet it is easy to discover the primitive divinity in this book, so that some authors have thought the missal the most eligible refutation of the worship prescribed by the missal itself. We consider the Talmud, and other writings of the modern Jews, in the same light. The ancient Jews, we see, took the prophecies, which St. Paul alledgeth, in the three chapters that I have quoted, in the same sense in which the apostle took them, and like him, understood them of the infidelity of the Jews in the time of the Messiah.

St. Paul in Rom. ix. 25. quotes a prophecy from Hosea, *I will call them my people, which were not my people* The ancient Jews took this prophecy in the apostle's sense, and we have this gloss on the words of Hosea still in the Talmud: *The time shall come, wherein they, who were not my people shall turn unto the Lord, and shall become my people,* chap. ii. 23.

St. Paul in Rom. ix. 23. cites a prophecy from Isaiah: *Behold! I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone,* chap. viii. 14. The ancient Jews took this prophecy in the same sense, and we have still this gloss in the Talmud: *When the son of David shall come,* that is to say, in the time of the Messiah, *the two houses of the fathers,* that is, the kingdom of Israel, and that of Judah, (these two kingdoms included the whole nation of the Jews) *the two houses of the fathers shall be cast off, according as it is written, Behold! I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone.*

The

The apostle, in Rom. x. 19. alledgeth a passage from Deuteronomy; *I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people*, chap. xxxii. 21. The Jews, both ancient and modern, take this prophecy in the same sense, and one of their books entitled, *The book by excellence*, explains the whole chapter of the time of the Messiah.

Our text is taken by St. Paul from Isaiah's prophecy, *All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.* The ancient Jews took the words in the same sense, as we can prove by the writings of the modern Jews. *Aben Ezra* quotes an ancient Rabbi, who explains the prophecy more like a christian than a Jew. These are his words: *I have found the nations which called not on me: but as for my people, in vain have I stretched out my hands unto them.* St. Paul proves that the hardness of heart of the Jewish nation was foretold by the prophets, and the Jews, in like manner, have preserved a tradition of the infidelity of their nation in the time of the Messiah: hence this saying of a Rabbi: *God abode three years and a half on Mount Olivet in vain, in vain he cried, Seek ye the Lord! and therefore am I found of them who sought me not.*

We have, then, a right to say, that my text speaks of the unbelief of the Jews in the time of the Messiah. This we were to prove, and to prove this infidelity is to exhibit a prodigy of hardness of heart, the eternal opprobrium and shame of the Jewish nation. This is the first point of light, in which we are to consider unbelief, and the smallest attention is sufficient to discover its turpitude.

Consider the pains that Jesus Christ took to convince, and to reform the Jews. To them he consecrated the first functions of his ministry; he never went out of their towns and provinces; he seemed to have come only for them, and to have brought a gospel formed on the plan of the law, and restrained to the Jewish nation alone. The evangelists have remarked these things, and he himself said, *I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, Matt. xv. 24. When he sent his apostles, he expressly commanded them *not to go into the way of the gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans to enter not*, chap. x. 5. And the apostles, after his ascension, began to exercise their ministry after his example, by saying to the Jews, *Unto you first, God sent his Son Jesus to bless you*, Acts iii. 26.

Consider,

Consider, further, the means which Jesus Christ employed to recover this people. Here a boundless field of meditation opens: but the limits of these exercises forbid my enlarging, and I shall only indicate the principal articles.

What proper means of conviction did Jesus omit in the course of his ministry among this people? Are miracles proper? *Though ye believe not me, believe the works,* John x. 38. Were extraordinary discourses proper? *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin,* chap. xv. 22. Is innocence proper? *Which of you convinceth me of sin?* chap. viii. 46. Is the authority of the prophets necessary? *Search the scriptures, for they are they which testify of me,* chap. v. 39. Is it proper to reason with people on their own principles? *Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me,* ver. 46. *Is it not written in your law, I said ye are Gods? If he called them Gods, unto whom the word of God came, say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemest; because I said I am the Son of God,* chap. x. 34—36.

Consider, again, the different forms, if I may be allowed to speak so, which Jesus Christ put on to insinuate himself into their minds. Sometimes he addressed them by condescension, submitting to the rites of the law, receiving circumcision, going up to Jerusalem, observing the sabbath, and celebrating their festivals. At other times he exhibited a noble liberty, freeing himself from the rites of the law, travelling on sabbath-days, and neglecting their feasts. Sometimes he conversed familiarly with them, eating and drinking with them, mixing himself in their entertainments, and assisting at their marriage feasts. At other times he put on the austerity of retirement, fleeing from their societies, retreating into the deserts, devoting himself for whole nights to meditation and prayer, and for whole weeks to prayer and fasting. Sometimes he addressed himself to them by a graceful gentleness: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly in heart. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!* Matt. xi. 28, 29. and xxiii. 37. At other times he tried them by severity, he drove them from the temple; he denounced the judgments

of God against them; he depicted a future day of vengeance, and shewing Jerusalem covered with the carcases of the slain, the holy mountain flowing with blood, and the temple consuming in flames, he cried *Wo, wo* to the pharisees! *Wo* to the scribes! *Wo* to all the doctors of the law! ver. 13. &c.

Jesus Christ, in the whole of his advent, answered the characters by which the prophets had described the Messiah. What characters, it may be asked, do you Jews expect in a Messiah, which Jesus Christ doth not bear? Born of your nation,—in your country,—of a virgin,—of the family of David,—of the tribe of Judah,—in Bethlehem,—after the seventy weeks,—at the expiration of your grandeur, and before the departure of your sceptre. On the one hand, *despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, wounded for your transgressions, bruised for your iniquities, brought as a lamb to the slaughter, cut off from the land of the living*, as your prophets had foretold, Isa. liii. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8. But on the other hand, glorious, and magnanimous, *prolonging his days, seeing his seed, the pleasure of the Lord, prospering in his hand, justifying many by his knowledge, blessed of God, girding his sword upon his thigh, and riding prosperously on the word of his truth*, as the same prophets had taught you to hope, ver. 10, 11. and Psal. xlv. 2, 3. What Messiah, then, do you wait for? If you require another gospel, produce us another law. If you reject Jesus Christ, reject Moses. If you want other accomplishments, shew us other prophecies. If you will not receive our apostles, discard your own prophets.

Such was the conduct of Jesus to the Jews. What success had he? What effects were produced by all his labour, and by all his love; by so many conclusive sermons, and so many pressing exhortations; by so much demonstrative evidence, by so many exact characters, and so many shining miracles; by so much submission, and so much elevation; by so much humility, and so much glory; and, so to speak, by so many different forms, which Jesus Christ took to insinuate himself into the minds of this people? You hear in the words of the text: *All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.* The malice of this people prevailed over the mercy of God, and mercy was useless except to a few. The ancient Jews were infidels, and most of the modern Jews persist in infidelity. Is

not

not this a prodigy of hardness? Is not this an eternal reproach and shame to the Jewish nation?

II. But we have pursued the unbelief of the Jews far enough in the first point of view; let us proceed to consider it with a view to what we proposed in the second place. We will shew that men's obstinate resistance of the most pressing motives, the most important interests, and the most illustrious examples, is not an unheard-of thing: and we will prove, that all which results from the example of the unbelieving Jews, is a proof of the uniformity of the depravity of mankind; that they who lived in the times of the first planters of christianity, resembled the greatest part of those who lived before them, and of those who have lived since. Would to God this article were less capable of evidence! But alas! we are going to conduct you step by step to demonstration

First, We will take a cursory view of ancient history, and we will shew you, that the conduct of the unbelieving Jews presents nothing new, nothing that had not been done before, nothing contrary to the universal practice of mankind from Adam to Jesus Christ.

Secondly, We will go a step further, and shew you a whole community, who amidst the light of the gospel, reject the doctrines of the gospel, for the same theological reasons for which the Jews rejected it.

Thirdly, We will produce an object yet more astonishing; a multitude of christians, whom the light of the reformation hath freed from the superstition that covered the church, guilty of the very excesses which we lament in the Jews, and in superstitious christians.

Fourthly, We will go further still, we will suppose this congregation in the place of the ancient Jews, and we will prove, that had you been in their places, you would have done as they did.

The last is only supposition, we will therefore in the fifth place, realize it, and shew you, not that you would have acted like the Jews, had you been in their circumstances; but that you realy do act so; and we will shew you an image of yourselves in the conduct of the ancient Jews.

1. The infidelity of those who heard the sermons of the first heralds of religion, might surprize us, if truth and virtue had always been embraced by the greatest number, and if the multitude had not always taken the side of vice and

falshood. But survey the principal periods of the church from the beginning of the world to that time, and you will see a very different conduct.

When there was only one man, and one woman in the world, and when these two, who came from the immediate hand of God, could not question, either his existence or his perfections, they both preferred the direction of the Devil before that of the Supreme Being, who had just brought them into existence, Gen. iii.

Did God give them a posterity? The children walked in the criminal steps of their parents. The fear and the worship, of the true God were confined to the family of Seth, to a small number of believers, whom the scripture calls *Sons of God*, chap. vi. 2. while *the Sons of Men* acknowledged no other religion but their own fancies, no other law but their own lust.

Did mankind multiply? Errors and sins multiplied with them. The scripture saith, *All flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth, The Lord repented that he had made man on the earth*, ver. 12, 6, and by an universal deluge exterminated the whole impious race, except *eight persons*, 1 Pet. iii. 20.

Were these eight persons freed from the general flood? They peopled a new world with a succession as wicked as that which inhabited the old world, and which was drowned in the flood. They conspired together against God, and left to future ages a monument of their insolent pride, *a tower, the top* of which, they said, should *reach to heaven*, Gen. xi. 4.

Were these sons of presumption dispersed? Their depravity and their idolatry they carried with them, and with both they infected all the places of their exile. Except Abraham, his family, and a small number of believers, nobody worshipped, or knew the true God.

Were the descendents of this patriarch multiplied into a nation, and loaden with the distinguishing blessings of God? They distinguished themselves also by their excesses. Under the most august legislation, and against the clearest evidence, they adopted notions the most absurd, and perpetrated crimes the most unjust. They carried the tabernacle of Moloch in the wilderness; they proposed the stoning of Moses and Aaron; they preferred the slavery of Egypt before the liberty of the sons of God.

Were

Were these people conducted by a train of miracles to the land of promise? The blessings, that God bestowed so liberally on them, they generally turned into weapons of war against their benefactor. They shook off the gentle government of that God, who had chosen them for his subjects, for the sake of submitting to the iron rods of such tyrants as those, who reigned over neighbouring nations.

Did God exceed their requests; did he give them princes, who were willing to support religion? They rebelled against them; they made a scandalous schism, and rendered that supreme worship to images, which was due to none but to the supreme God.

2. The people, of whom we have been speaking, lived before the time of Jesus Christ: But, I am to shew you, in the second place, a whole community, enlightened by the gospel, retaining the same principle, which was the chief cause of the infidelity of the Jews; I mean a blind submission to ecclesiastical rulers.

The Jewish doctors, who were contemporary with Jesus Christ, assumed a sovereign power over the people's minds; and the Rabbies, who have succeeded them, have done their utmost to maintain, and to extend it. Hence the superb titles, *Wise man*, *Father*, *Prince*, *King*, yea *God*. Hence the absolute tyranny of decisions of what is true, and what is false; what is venial, and what is unpardonable. Hence the seditious maxims of those of them, who affirm that they, who violate their canons, are worthy of death. Hence those blasphemous declarations, which say, that they have a right of giving what gloss they please to the law, should it be even against the law itself; on condition, however, of their affirming, that they were assisted by, I know not what, supernatural aid, which they call Bath-col, that is, *the daughter of a voice*.

Now, my brethren, when an ecclesiastic, hath arrived at a desire of domination over the minds of the people, and when the people are sunk so low as to suffer their ecclesiatics to exercise such a dominion, there is no opinion too fantastic, no prepossession too absurd, no doctrine too monstrous, to become an article of faith. It has been often objected against us, that to allow every individual the liberty of examining religion for himself is to open a door to heresy. But if ever recrimination were just, it is proper here. To give fallible men the power of finally determining matters of faith is to throw open flood-gates to the most palpable errors.

rors. Thou eternal truth! Thou sovereign teacher of the church! Thou high priest of the new covenant! Thou alone hast a right to claim a tacit submission of reason, an implicit obedience of faith. And thou, sacred book! Thou authentic gift of heaven! When my faith, and my religion are in question, thou art the only tribunal, at which I stand! But as for the doctrine of blind submission, I repeat it again, it will conduct us to the most palpable errors.

With the help of implicit faith, I could prove that a priest hath the power of deposing a king, and of transmitting the supreme power to a tyrant.

With this principle, I could prove that a frail man can call down the Saviour of the world at his will, place him on an altar, or confine him in a box.

With this principle, I could prove that what my smell takes for bread is not bread; and what my eyes take for bread is not bread; and what my taste takes for bread is not bread: and so on.

With this principle, I could prove that a body, which is all in one place, is at the same time all in another place; all at Rome and Constantinople; yea more, all entire in one host, and all entire in another host; yea more astonishing still, all entire in one host, and all entire in ten thousand hosts; yea more amazing still, all entire in ten thousand hosts, and all entire in each part of these ten thousand hosts; all entire in the first particle, all entire in the second, and so on without number or end.

With this principle, I could prove, that a penitent is obliged to tell me all the secrets of his heart; and that, if he conceals any of its recesses from me, he is, on that very account, excluded from all the priviledges of penitence.

With this principle, I could prove, that money given to the church delivereth souls from purgatory; and that, according to the Bishop of Meaux, always when the souls in that prison hear the sound of the sums which are given for their freedom, they fly towards heaven.

3. You have seen a whole community professing christianity, and yet not believing the doctrines of Christ, through the prevalence of the same principle, which rendered the ancient Jews infidels. We proceed to shew you something more extraordinary still; a multitude of christians, instructed in the truths of the gospel, freed by the light of the reformation from the darkness, with which superstition had covered the gospel; and yet seducing themselves like the ancient Jews,

Jews, because their unworthy passions have render their seduction necessary.

Recall, my dear fellow countrymen, the happy days in which you were allowed to make an open profession of your religion in the place of your nativity. Amidst repeated provocations of the divine patience, which, at last, drew down the anger of God on our unhappy churches, there was one virtue, it must be owned, that shone with peculiar glory, I mean zeal for public worship. Whether mankind have in general more attachment to the exterior than to the inward part of divine worship; or whether the continual fear of the extinction of that light, which we enjoyed, contributed to render it sacred to us; or whatever were the cause, our ancient zeal for the public exterior worship of our religion may be equalled: but it can never be exceeded.

Ye happy inhabitants of these provinces! We are ready to yield to you the pre-eminence in all other virtues: This only we dispute with you. The singing of a psalm was enough to fire that vivacity, which is essential to our nation. Neither distance of place, nor inclemency of weather, could dispense with our attendance on a religious exercise. Long and wearisome journeys, through frosts and snows, we took to come at those churches, which were allowed us for public worship. Communion-days were triumphant days, which all were determined to share. Our churches were washed with penitential tears: and when, on days of fasting and prayer, a preacher desired to excite extraordinary emotions of grief, he was sure to succeed, if he cried: *God will take away his candlestick from you. God will deprive you of the churches, in which ye form only vain designs of conversion.*

Suppose, amidst a large concourse of people, assembled to celebrate a solemn feast, a preacher of falshood had ascended a pulpit of truth, and had affirmed these propositions. "External worship is not essential to salvation. They, "who diminish their revenues, or renounce the pleasures of "life, for the sake of liberty of conscience, do not rightly "understand the spirit of christianity. The Lord's supper "ought not to be neglected, when it can be administered "without peril: but we ought not to expose ourselves to "danger for the sake of a sacrament, which at most is only "a seal of the covenant, but not the covenant itself." In what light would such a preacher have been considered? The whole congregation would unanimously have cried,

Away

Away with him! Away with him! Numb. xxv. Many a Phineas, many an Eleazar would have been instantly animated with an impetuosity of fervour and zeal, which it would have been necessary to restrain.

O God! What are become of sentiments so pious, and so worthy of christianity! This article is a source of exquisite grief. In sight of these sad objects, we cry, *O wall of the daughter of Zion! let tears run down like a river day and night*, Lam. ii. 18. Here the sorrowful Rachael mourneth for her children; she uttereth *the voice of lamentation and bitter weeping, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are not*, Jer. xxxi. 15. Go, go see those degenerate sons of the reformation! Go try to communicate a brisker motion to that reformed blood, which still creeps slowly in their veins. Arouse them by urging the necessity of that external worship, of which they still retain some grand ideas. Alarm their ears with the thundering voice of the Son of God; tell them, *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven*, Matt. x. 37. 33. and what will they say? They will tax you with being an enthusiastic declaimer. The very propositions, which would have been rejected with horror, had they been affirmed in times of liberty, would now be maintained with the utmost zeal. But how comes it to pass, that what was formerly unwarrantable now appears just and true? The pliant artifice of the human mind hath wrought the change. The corruption of the heart knows how to fix the attention of the mind on objects, which palliate a criminal habit; and most men understand the secret art of seducing themselves, when their passions render a seduction needful.

At first, they required only the liberty of considering the bearing of the storm before the thunder bursts the clouds, that if they should be obliged to flee, it might be from real evils, and not from imaginary panics. At length the tempest came crushing and sweeping away all that opposed its progress. When the body must have been exposed for the salvation of the soul, the trial, they said, was severe, their hearts were intimidated, they fainted and durst not flee. Moreover, till they had amassed enough to support them in that exile, to which they should be instantly condemned, if they owned Jesus Christ; and lest they should leave their innocent children destitute of all support, they abjured their religion

religion for the present. Abjuration is always shocking: but if ever it seem to call for patience and pity, it is in such circumstances! when pretexts so plausible produce it, and when solemn vows are made to renounce it. When the performance of these vows was required, insurmountable obstacles forbad it, and the same reasons, which had sanctified this hypocrisy at first, required them to persist in it. When vigilant guards were placed on the frontiers of the kingdom, they waited, they said, only for a fair opportunity to escape, and they flattered themselves with fixing certain periods, in which they might safely execute what would be hazardous before to attempt. Sometimes it was the gaining of a battle, and sometimes the conclusion of a peace. As these periods were not attended with the advantages, which they had promised themselves, they looked forward, and appointed others. Others came. No more guards on the frontiers, no more obstacles, full liberty for all, who had courage, to follow Jesus Christ. And whither? Into dens, and deserts, exposed to every calamity? No; into delicious gardens; into countries, where the gentleness of the governments is alone sufficient to indemnify us for all we leave in our own country. But new times, new morals. The pretext of the difficulty of following Jesus Christ being taken away, the necessity of it is invalidated. Why, say they, should we abandon a country, in which people may profess what they please? Why not rather endeavour to preserve the seeds of the reformation in a kingdom, from which it would be entirely eradicated, if all they, who adhere to it, were to become voluntary exiles? Why restrain grace to some countries, religion to particular walls? Why should we not content ourselves with worshipping God in our closets, and in our families? The ministers of Jesus Chaist have united their endeavours to unravel these sophisms. We have heaped argument upon argument, demonstration upon demonstration. We have represented the utility of public worship. We have shewn the possibility, and the probability of a new period of persecution. We have conjured those, whom sad experience hath taught their own weakness, to ask themselves, whether they have obtained strength sufficient to bear such sufferings as those under which they formerly sank. We have proved that the posterity of those lukewarm christians will be entirely destitute of religion. In short, we have produced the highest degree of evidence in favour of their flight. All our argu-

ments have been useless; we have reasoned, and written, without success; we have *spent our strength in vain*, Lev. xxvi. 20. And except here and there an elect soul whom God in his infinite mercy hath delivered from all the miseries of such a state, they quietly eat and drink, build and plant, marry and are given in marriage, and die in this fatal stupidity.

Such is the flexible depravity of the human mind, and such was that of the Jews! Such is the ability of our hearts in exercising the fatal art of self-deception, when sinful passions require us to be deceived!

Represent to yourselves the cruel Jews, They expected a Messiah, who would furnish them with means of glutting their revenge, by treading the Gentiles beneath their feet, for them they considered as creatures unworthy of the least regard. Jesus Christ came, he preached and said, *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you*, Matt. v. 44. Revenge viewed the Messiah in a disadvantageous light. Revenge turned the attention of the Jews to this their favourite maxim, *The Messiah is to humble the enemies of the church*, whereas Jesus Christ left them in all their gaiety and pomp.

Represent to yourselves, those of the Jews, who were insatiably desirous of riches. They expected a Messiah, who would lavish his treasures on them, and would so fulfil these expressions of the prophets, *Silver is mine, and gold is mine*, Hag. ii. 8. *The kings of Tarshish, and of the isles, shall bring presents*, Psal. lxxii. 10. Jesus Christ came, he preached, and said, *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth*, Matt. vi. 19. Avidity of riches considered the Messiah in a disadvantageous light. Avidity of riches confined the attention of the Jews to this favourite maxim, *The Messiah is to enrich his disciples*, whereas Jesus Christ left his followers in indigence and want.

Represent to yourselves the proud and arrogant Jews. They expected a Messiah, who would march at their head, conquer the Romans, who were become the terror of the world; and obtain victories similar to those, which their ancestors had obtained over nations recorded in history for their military skill. They fed their ambition with these memorable prophecies: *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron: thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and*

and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust, Psal. ii. 8, 9. and lxxii. 8, 9. Jesus Christ came, he preached, and said, *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. v. 10. He marched first at the head of this afflicted host, and finished his mournful life on a cross. Arrogance and pride considered Jesus Christ in a disadvantageous light. Arrogance and pride confined the attention of the Jews to this maxim, *The Messiah is to sit on a throne:* whereas Jesus Christ was nailed to a cross. When we know the pliant depravity of the human heart, when we know its ability to deceive itself, when its passions require it to be deceived; can we be astonished that Jesus Christ had so few partisans among the Jews?

4. But our fourth reflection will remove our astonishment; it regards the presumptious ideas, which we form of our own virtue, when it hath not been tried. For this purpose, we are going to put you in the place of the ancient Jews, and to prove, that in the same circumstances you would have acted the same part.

There is a kind of sophistry, which is adapted to all ages, and to all countries. I mean that turn of mind, which judgeth those vices, in which we have no share. The malice of our hearts seldom goeth so far as to love sin for its own sake. When sin presents itself to our view, free from any self-interest in committing it, and when we have the liberty of a cool, calm, and dispassionate sight of it, it seldom fails to inspire us with horror. And, as this disposition of mind prevails, when we think over the atrocious vices of former ages, we generally abhor the sins, and condemn the men who committed them. They appear monsters to us, and nature seems to have produced but a few. We seem to ourselves beings of another kind, and we can hardly suffer the question to be put, whether in the same circumstances we should not have pursued the same conduct.

In this disposition we usually judge the ancient Jews. How could they rebel against those deliverers, whom God, if I may speak so, armed with his omnipotence to free them from the bondage of Egypt? How could they possibly practise gross idolatry on the banks of the red sea, which had just before been miraculously divided for their passage, and which had just before overwhelmed their enemies? While heaven was every instant lavishing miracles in their favour, how

could they possibly place their abominable idols in the throne of the living God? How could their descendents resist the ministry of such men as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and all the other prophets, whose missions appeared so evidently divine?

In the same disposition we judge those Jews, who heard the sermons, and who saw the miracles, of Jesus Christ. Their unbelief appears a greater prodigy than all the other prodigies, which we are told, they resisted. It seems a phœnomenon, out of the ordinary course of nature. And we persuade ourselves that had we been in similar circumstances, we should have acted in a very different manner.

As I said before, my brethren, this sophistry is not new. When we reason thus in regard to those Jews, who lived in the time of Jesus Christ, we only repeat what they themselves said in regard to them, who lived in the times of the ancient prophets. Jesus Christ, reproacheth them with it in these emphatical words: *Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers,* Matt. xxiii. 29, 30, 32. Let us not lightly pass over these words. I have read them as they are in the gospel of St. Matthew. St. Luke has them a little differently, *Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres,* chap. xi. 48. Both express the same thing The Jews, who were contemporary with Christ, having no interest in the wickedness of their ancestors, considered it in the disposition of which we have been speaking, and were ashamed of it, and condemned it. They considered themselves in contrast with them, and gave themselves the preference. *If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.* Jesus Christ undeceives them, and rends the vail, with which they covered the turpitude of their own hearts from themselves. He declares, if they had lived in the days of their fathers, they would have imitated their conduct; because, being in similar circumstances, they actually pursued similar methods. And he assures them, that, if they were judged by their fruits, their zeal in repairing the sepulchres, and in embellishing the monuments, of the prophets, proceeded less from a design to honour the memories of the holy

holy men, than from a disposition to imbrue their own sacrilegious hands in their blood, as their ancestors had formerly done.

The duty of my office, and the subject, which providence calls me to-day to explain, oblige me to make an odious, but perhaps a too just application of these words. When you hear of the unbelief of the Jews, you say, "If we had "lived in the times of them, who heard the sermons of Je- "sus Christ, and who saw his miracles, we would not have "been partakers with them in the parricide of the prophets." Alas! my brethren, how little do we know of ourselves! How easy is it to form projects of virtue and holiness, when nothing but the forming of them is in question; and when we are not called to practise and execute them! But what! you my brethren! would you have believed in Jesus Christ? You would have believed in Jesus Christ, you would have followed Jesus Christ, would you?

Well then, realize the name of Jesus Christ. Suppose the Hague instead of Jerusalem. Suppose Jesus Christ in the place of one of those insignificant men, who preach the gospel to you. And suppose this congregation, instead of the Jews, to whom Jesus Christ preached, and in whose presence he wrought his miracles. You would have believed in Jesus Christ, would you? You would have followed Jesus Christ, would you?

What! thou idle soul! thou, who art so indolent in every thing connected with religion, that thou sayest, we require too much, when we endeavour to persuade thee to examine the reasons, which retain thee in the profession of Christianity; when we exhort thee to consult thy pastors, and to read religious books! What! would'st thou have renounced thine indifference and sloth, if thou hadst lived in the days of Jesus Christ? Would thy supine soul have aroused itself to examine the evidences of the divinity of his mission, to develope the sophisms, with which his enemies opposed him, to assort the prophecies with the actions of his life, in order to determine their accomplishment in his person?

What! thou vain soul! who always takest up the upper-hand in society, who art incessantly prating about thy birth, thine ancestors, thy rank! Thou who studiest to make thy dress, the tone of thy voice, thine air, thy gait, thine equipage, thy skeleton, thy carcase, thine all, proclaim thee a superior personage! Would'st thou have joined thyself to the populace, who followed Jesus Christ; to the poor fisherman, and

and to the contemptible publicans, who composed the apostolic school; would'st thou have followed this Jesus?

What! thou miser! who wallowest in silver and gold; thou, who dost idolize thy treasures, and makest thy heart, not a temple of the holy Ghost, but a temple of Mammon; thou, who art able to resist the exhortations and intreaties, the prayers and the tears of the servants of God; who art insensible to every form of address, which thy pastors take to move thee not to suffer to die for want of sustenance, whom? A poor miserable old man, who sinking under the pains and infirmities of old age, is surrounded with indigence, and even wants bread. Thou! who art so ungenerous, so unnatural, and so barbarous, that thou refusest the least relief to an object of misery so affecting; would'st thou have believed in Jesus Christ? Would'st thou have followed Jesus Christ? Thou! Would'st thou have obeyed this command, *Go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow me?* Matt. xix. 21.

Ah! *Wo unto you, scribes, and pharisees, hypocrites! Ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets:* But with too much propriety may I apply to some of you the following words: *Behold! I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes, and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, the son of Barachias*, Matt. xxiii. 29, 34, 35. Yea, behold! God sends ministers unto you, who preach the same doctrine now that Jesus Christ preached in his day. Resist them, as the Jews resisted Jesus Christ; withstand their preaching, as the Jews withstood the preaching of Jesus Christ; ridicule them, as the Jews ridiculed Jesus Christ; call them *gluttons* and *wine-bibbers*, Matt. xi. 19. as the Jews called Jesus Christ; contemn the judgments which they denounce, as the Jews contemned the judgments which Jesus Christ foretold: till all the calamitous judgments which are due to the resistance that this nation hath made against the gospel-ministry from its beginning to this day, fall upon you. But cease to consider the infidelity and obstinacy of the Jews as an extraordinary phœnomenon. Do not infer from their not believing the

the miracles of Christ, that Jesus Christ wrought no miracles. Do not say, *Religion hath but few disciples*, therefore *the grounds of religion are not very evident.* For you are, the greatest part of you, a refutation of your own sophism. You are witnesses that there is a kind of infidelity and obstinacy, which resisteth the most powerful motives, the most plain demonstrations. And these public assemblies, this auditory, this concourse of people, all these demonstrate that wisdom hath but few disciples. This is what we undertook to prove.

5. But all this is only supposition. What will you say, if by dicussing the fifth article we apply the subject! And if, instead of saying, Had you lived in the days of the ancient Jews, you would have rejected the ministry of Jesus Christ, as they rejected it; we should tell you, you actually do reject it, as they did? This proposition hath nothing hyperbolical in it in regard to a great number of you. Nothing more is necessary to prove it, than a list of the most essential maxims of the morality of the gospel, and a comparison of them with the opposite notions which such christians form.

For example, it is a maxim of the gospel, that *virtue doth not consist in a simple negation; but in something real and positive.* In like manner, in regard to the employment of *time.* What duty is more expressly commanded in the gospel? What duty is more closely connected with the great end for which God hath placed us in this world? Is not the small number of years, are not the few days, which we pass upon earth given us to prepare for eternity? Doth not our eternal destiny depend on the manner in which we spend these few days and years on earth? Yet to see christians miserably consume upon *nothings* the most considerable parts of their lives, would tempt one to think that they had the absolute disposal of an inexhaustible fund of duration.

The delaying of conversion would afford another subject, proper to shew the miserable art of the greatest part of mankind, of shutting their eyes against the clearest truths; and of hardening themselves against the most powerful motives. Have not all casuists, even they who are the most opposite to each other on all other articles, agreed in this? Have they not unanimously endeavoured to free us from this miserable prepossession, that *God will judge us, not according to the manner in which we live; but according to the manner in which we die?* Have they not agreed in representing

to

to us the inability of dying people to meditate with any degree of application; and, in a manner, the impossibility of being entirely renewed on a dying bed; and yet, do not the greater number of christians, even of those whose piety seems the most genuine, defer a great part of the work of their salvation to a dying hour? If you think I colour the corruption of the age too strongly, answer me one question. *Whence proceeds our usual fear of sudden death?* Since the last stages of life are generally the most fatiguing; since the reliefs that are applied then are so disgustful; since parting adieus are so exquisitely painful; since slow agonies of death are so intolerable; why do we not consider sudden death as the most desirable of all advantages? Why is it not the constant object of our wishes? Why doth a sudden death terrify a whole city? Is it not because our consciences tell us, that there remains a great deal to be done on our death-beds; and that we have deferred that work to the last period of life, which we ought to have performed in the days of vigour and health? Let us enter into these discussions, and we shall find, that it doth not belong to us, of all people, to exclaim against the obstinacy and infidelity of the Jews.

I have run this disagreeable parallel, I own, with great reluctance. However, the inference from the whole, methinks, is very plain. The multitude ought to be no rule to us. We ought rather to imitate the example of one good christian, than that of a multitude of idiots, who furiously rush into eternal misery. They who rebel against the doctrines of Jesus Christ, are idiots; they who submit to them, are wise men. If the first class exceed the last, beyond all comparison in number, they ought to have no influence over our lives. If the smallest be the wisest class, we are bound to imitate them. Thus Jesus Christ reasons: *Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the market place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread, nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of all her children,* Luke vii. 31, &c.

There

There were but very few of the Jews who entered into the spirit of the gospel; as I own there are but few of those who are called christians, who enter into it: but they are the wise and rational part of mankind. Jesus Christ himself hath determined it. *Wisdom is justified of* ALL *her children.* This is not the opinion of a declaimer; this is the axiom of a philosopher; an axiom that carries its proof and demonstration with it.

Who were those Jews who resisted the powerful exhortations of Jesus Christ, and the clear evidence of his miracles? They were idiots, who imagined God would suffer all the laws of nature to be interrupted to favour falshood, and to authorize an impostor: idiots who thought Satan would oppose himself, and would himself lend his power to a man, whose doctrine had no other end than the subversion of his empire: idiots, who annihilated prophecy under a pretence of giving it a sublime meaning: idiots who knew not the true interest of mankind; who could not perceive, that to put riches and grandeurs into the possession of men whose dispositions, like theirs, were unrenewed, was to put daggers and death into madmen's hands: idiots, who for a great number of years had lightnings flashing in their eyes, and thunders roaring in their ears; but who coolly endeavoured to shut their eyes, and to stop their ears, till the tempest struck them dead, and reduced them to ashes.

What is the character of a modern infidel, who prefers a system of irreligion before the system of christianity? He is an idiot; a man, who voluntarily shuts himself against evidence and truth: a man, who, under pretence that all cannot be explained to him, determines to deny what can; a man, who cannot digest the difficulties of religion; but can digest those of scepticism; a man, who cannot conceive how the world should owe its existence to a Supreme Being; but can easily conceive how it was formed by chance. On the contrary, What is the character of a believer? He is a wise man; *a child of wisdom;* a man, who acknowledgeth the imperfections of his nature: a man who, knowing by experience the inferiority and uncertainty of his own conjectures, applies to revelation: a man, who, distrusting his own reason, yields it up to the direction of an infallible Being, and is thus enabled, in some sense, to see with the eyes of God himself.

What is the character of a man, who refuseth to obey this

saying of Jesus Christ, *No man can serve two masters?* Matt. vi. 24. He is an idiot; he is a man, who, by endeavouring to unite the joys of heaven with the pleasures of the world, deprives himself of the happiness of both: he is a man who is always agitated between two opposite parties, that makes his soul a seat of war, where virtue and vice are in continual fight. On the contrary, what is the character of a man, who obeys this saying of Jesus Christ? He is a man, who, after he hath applied all the attention, of which he is capable, to distinguish the good from the bad, renounceth the last, and embraceth the first: a man, who, having felt the force of virtuous motives, doth not suffer himself to be imposed on by sensual sophisms: a man, who judgeth of truth and error by those infallible marks, which characterize both; and not by a circulation of the blood, a flow, or a dejection, of animal spirits, and by other similar motives, which, if I may be allowed to say so, make the whole course of the logic, and the whole stock of the erudition, of the children of this world.

What is the character of the man, who refuseth to obey this command of Jesus Christ, *Lay not up treasures upon earth; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also?* Matt. vi. 19. 21. He is a man, who fixeth his hopes on a sinking world: a man, who forgets that death will spoil him of all his treasures: a man, who is blind to the shortnes of his life: a man who is insensible to the burden of old age, even while it weighs him down; who never saw the wrinkles that disfigure his countenance: a man who is deaf to the voice of universal nature, to the living, the dying, and the dead, who in concert cry, *Remember, thou art mortal!* On the contrary, what is the character of him, who obeys this command of Jesus Christ? It is wisdom. The man is one, who elevates his hopes above the ruins of a sinking world: a man who clings to the rock of ages; who buildeth his house on that rock; who sendeth all his riches before him into eternity; who maketh God, the great God, the depository of his happiness: a man who is the same in every turn of times, because no variation can deprive him of the happiness which he hath chosen.

And what are the men who resist our ministry: who hear our sermons, as if they were simple amusements; who when they depart from their places of worship, return to the dissipations and vices from which they came; who after they

they have fasted and prayed, and received the communion, are always as worldly, always as proud, always as revengeful, always as ready to calumniate as before? They are really idiots, who know not the days of their visitation; who *despise the riches of the forbearance of God, not knowing that his goodness leadeth to repentance*, Rom. ii. 4. they are idiots, who felicitate themselves to-day with worldly pursuits, which to-morrow will tear their souls asunder on a death-bed, and the sorrowful remembrance of which will torment them through the boundless ages of eternity. And those auditors who are attentive to our doctrines, and obedient to our precepts; those auditors who thankfully receive the wise, and patiently bear with the weak, in our ministry; what are they? They are wise men, who refer our ministry to its true meaning, who nourish their souls with the truths, and daily advance in practising the virtues of their calling.

How much doth a contrast of these characters display the glory of christianity? is this religion less the work of wisdom, because idiots reject it; Doth not the honour of a small number of wise disciples indemnify us for all the attacks that a croud of extravagant people make on it? And were you to choose a pattern for yourselves to-day, my brethren, which of the two examples would make the deepest impressions on you? Would you choose to imitate a small number of wise men, or a multitude of fools? To be reproached for preciseness and singularity is a very powerful temptation, and piety will often expose us to it. What! every body else goes into company, and would you distinguish yourself by living always shut up at home? How! every body allows one part of the day to gaming and pastime; and would you render yourself remarkable by devoting every moment of the day to religion? What! nobody in the world requires above a day or two to prepare for the sacrament; and would you distinguish yourself by employing whole weeks in preparing for that ceremony? Yes, I would live a singular kind of life! Yes, I would distinguish myself! Yes, tho' all the pharisees, though all the doctors of the law, though all the whole synagogue should unite in rejecting Jesus Christ; I would devote myself to him! World! thou shalt not be my judge. World! it is not thou who shalt decide what is shameful and what is glorious. Provided I have the

children of wisdom for my companions, angels for my witnesses, my Jesus for my guide, my God for my rewarder, and heaven for my recompense: all the rest signify but little to me! May God inspire us with these sentiments! Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

CHRISTIANITY NOT SEDITIOUS.

LUKE xxiii. 5.

He stirreth up the people.

NEVER was a charge more unjustly brought, never was a charge more fully and nobly retorted, than that of Ahab against Elijah. Elijah was raised up to resist the torrent of corruption and idolatry, which overflowed the kingdom of Israel. God, who had appointed him to an office so painful and important, had richly imparted to him the gifts necessary to discharge it: so that when the scriptures would give us a just notion of the herald of the Messiah, it saith, *He shall go in the spirit and power of Elias*, Luke i. 17. Sublimity in his ideas, energy in his expressions, grandeur in his sentiments, glory in his miracles, all contributed to elevate this prophet to the highest rank among them, who have managed the sword of the spirit with reputation and success. This extraordinary man appears before Ahab, who insults him with this insolent language, *Art thou he that troubleth Israel?* 1 Kings xviii. 17. Was ever a charge more unjustly brought? Elijah is not terrified with this language. Neither the majesty, nor the madness, of Ahab, neither the rage of Jezebel, nor the remembrance of so many prophets of the true God sacrificed to false gods, nothing terrifies him, nothing affects him. *I have not troubled Israel*, replies he; *but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim*, ver. 18. Was ever a charge retorted with more magnanimity and courage?

My

My brethren, I invite you to day to contemplate men more unjust than Ahab, and I invite you to contemplate one more magnanimous than Elijah. Jesus Christ undertook a work, that all the prophets—what am I saying? he undertook a work which all the angels of heaven united would have undertaken in vain. He came to reconcile heaven and earth. God, who sent him into the world on this grand business; communicated *the Spirit without measure to him*, John iii. 34. Jesus Christ dedicated himself entirely to the office. He made the will of the Father, who had charged him with the salvation of mankind, his *meat and drink*, chap. iv. 34. By meditation, by retirement, by a holiness formed on the plan of the holiness of God, of whose *glory* he is the *brightness*, of whose *person* he is *the express image*, Heb. i. 3. he prepared himself for that grand sacrifice, which was designed to extinguish the flames of divine justice, burning to avenge the wickedness of mankind. After a life so truly amiable, he was dragged before judges, and accused before human tribunals of being a firebrand of sedition, who came to set society in a flame. Jesus Christ was not moved with this accusation. Neither the inveteracy of his accusers, nor the partiality of his judge, nor the prospect of death, nor the idea of the cross, on which he knew he was to expire, nothing could make him act unworthy of his character. Always ready to communicate to inquirers the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, of which he was the depositary, and to reveal himself to them, as *the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*, John i. 9. on this occasion, he justly discovered his superiority over his accusers, and over his judges, by refusing to gratify the vain desire of Herod, who wished to see him work a miracle, and by leaving, without any other apology, his doctrine to apologize for itself.

These are the grand objects, which are proposed to your meditation in the text, and in the seven following verses, that are connected with it. The whole period is perhaps the most barren part of the history of the passion: but the most barren parts of this miraculous history are so fruitful in instruction, that I must needs omit many articles, and confine myself to the examination of the first words, which are my text, *he stirreth up the people*. It will be necessary, however, briefly to explain the following verses, and after a short explication of them we will return to the text, the principal matter of this discourse. We will examine the charge of troubling society,

society, which hath been always laid against Jesus Christ, and his gospel.

O, you! who so often blame religious discourses for troubling that false peace, which you taste in the arms of security; blush to day to see what unworthy models you imitate! And we, ministers of the living God, so often intimidated at this odious charge, let us learn to day courageously to follow the steps of that Jesus, who bore so great a *contradiction of sinners against himself!* Heb. xii. 3. May God assist us in this work! Amen.

Jesus Christ had been interrogated by Pilate, and had answered two calumnies, that had been objected against him, The conduct of Jesus Christ had always been remarkable for submission to magistracy, and for contempt of human grandeurs. However, he had been accused before Pilate of having forbidden to pay tribute to Cæsar, and of having affected royalty. Pilate had examined him on these two articles, and on both Jesus Christ had justified his innocence, confounded his accusers, and satisfied his judge.

An upright judge would have acquitted this illustrious prisoner, after he had acknowledged his innocence. Pilate took another method. Whether it were cowardice, or folly, or policy, or all these dispositions together, he seized the first opportunity, that offered, to remove a cause into another court, which, he thought, he could not determine without danger to himself. My brethren, I have known many magistrates of consummate knowledge; I have seen many of incorruptible principles, whose equity was incapable of diversion by those bribes, which the scripture saith, *blind the eyes of the wise*, Exod. xxiii. 8. But how rare are they, who have resolution enough, not only to judge with rectitude, but also to support, with an undaunted heroism, those suffrages, which are the dictates of equity and truth! Pilate, instead of discharging Jesus Christ from his persecutors and executioners, in some sort, assisted their cruelty. Neither able sufficiently to stifle the dictates of his own conscience to condemn him, nor obedient enough to them to acquit him, he endeavoured to find a judge either more courageous, who might deliver him, or less scrupulous, who might condemn him to death.

The countrymen of Jesus Christ furnished Pilate with a pretence. *They were the more fierce*, saith our evangelist, *saying, He stirreth up the people from Galilee to this place.*

place. Who were they who brought this accusation against Jesus Christ? Were they only Roman soldiery, and the Jewish populace? No: they were divines and ecclesiastics! . . . . let us turn from these horrors. *When Pilate heard of Galilee,* adds St. Luke, *he asked whether the man were a Galilean.* Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, a town in Judea, according to this prophecy of Micah: *And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a governor, that shall rule my people Israel,* Matt. ii. 6. But his mother was of Nazareth, a town of Galilee, from whence she came to Jerusalem with Joseph, on account of a command of Augustus, which it is needless to enlarge on here. In Galilee, therefore, and particularly at Nazareth, Jesus Christ passed those thirty years of his life, of which the evangelists give us no account. We may remark, by the way, that these circumstances brought about the accomplishment of this prophecy, *He shall be called a Nazarene,* ver. 23. This prophesy, cited in the new testament, is not to be found literally in the old: but the prophets very often foretold the contempt that the Jews would pour on Jesus Christ; and his dwelling in Galilee, particularly at Nazareth, was an occasion, as of their contempt, so of the accomplishment of prophecy. The Jews considered Galilee, as a country hateful to God; and although Jonah was born there, yet they had a saying, that *no Galilean had ever received the Spirit of God.* Hence the Sanhedrim said to Nicodemus, *Search, and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet,* John vii. 52. Agreeably to this notion, when Philip said to Nathaniel, *We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth,* chap. i. 45. the latter replied, *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* ver. 46 The Jews were transported to find, that Jesus Christ was an inhabitant of this city; because it served them for a pretence to give him a name of contempt, accordingly, they called him a *Nazarene.* They afterwards gave the same despieable name to his disciples. St. Jerom tells us, that in his time they anathematized christians under the name of Nazarenes. We see also in the book of Acts, that christians were called Galileans; and by this name they are known in heathen writers.

Let us return. Herod Antipas, (son of Herod the great, the same whom John the Baptist reproved for keeping Herodias,

dias, his brother Philip's wife) reigned in Galilee, under the name of tetrarch, when Jesus Christ was cited before Pilate. This was what engaged the Roman governor to send him to this prince. Whether Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, descended from heathen parents, as some affirm; whether he were of Jewish extraction, as others say; or whether he were an Idumean, according to the general opinion, is not very material. It is very certain, that if this prince were not sincerely of the religion of Moses, he pretended to be so; and as the law required all heads of families to celebrate four grand festivals in the year, at the capital of Judea, he had come up to Jerusalem to keep the passover, at which time the Lord Jesus underwent his passion.

The reputation of our Saviour had reached this prince. The gospel tells us the absurd notion that he had entertained of him. He thought him John the Baptist, whom he had sacrificed, with as much cowardice as cruelty, to the revenge of Herodias. His notion was founded on an opinion of the Jews, who thought, that many prophets, particularly they who had sealed the doctrine with their blood, would rise again at the coming of the Messiah. Herod was glad of an opportunity of informing himself on this article. He flattered himself, that if he should not see such a singular object as a man raised from the dead, at least, Jesus Christ would not refuse to conciliate his esteem, by gratifying his curiosity, and by performing some extraordinary work in his presence. But should providence interrupt the ordinary course of nature to amuse a profane court? Jesus Christ not only would not prostitute his miraculous gifts before Herod; he would not even deign to answer him.

A very little attention to the genius of the great will be sufficient to convince us, that the silence of Jesus Christ, and his refusal to condescend to the caprice of Herod, must naturally expose him to the contempt of this prince, and to that of his courtiers. Accordingly, we are told, that they *set him at nought, and mocked him, and sent him back again to Pilate.* Some have inquired a reason, why Herod put on him *a white garment**; and some learned men have

* Our author follows the reading of the French bible,—revestu d'un vestement *blanc*: Our translation reads it, arrayed in a *gorgeous* robe; and the original word signifies both. A *white* garment was a *gorgeous*, a *splendid* garment; because *priests*

thought, he intended thereby to attest his innocence; and this opinion seems to agree with what Pilate said to the Jews; neither *I nor Herod have found any fault in this man, touching those things whereof ye accuse him.* But they who advance this opinion, ought to prove that the Jews, or the Romans, did put white garments on persons whom they acquitted. I own, though I have taken some pains to look for this custom in the writings of antiquity, I have not been able to find it: however, it doth not follow that others may not discover it. Nor is it any clearer, in my opinion, that the design of those who put this habit on Jesus Christ, was the same with that of the soldiers, who put a reed in the form of a sceptre in his hand to insult him, because he said, he was a king. I would follow the rule here, which seems to me the most sure, that is, I would suspend my judgment on a subject that cannot be explained.

I add but one word more, before I come to the principal object of our meditation. The evangelist remarks, that the circumstances which he related, I mean the artful address of Pilate to Herod, in sending a culprit of his jurisdiction to his bar; and the similar artifice of Herod to Pilate, in sending him back again, occasioned their reconciliation. What could induce them to differ? We are told, that some subjects of Herod Antipas, who probably had made an insurrection against the Romans, had been punished at Jerusalem during the passover by Pilate, Luke xiii. 1. who had mixed their blood with that of the sacrifices, which they intended to

priests and *kings* wore *white* garments, see Esther, viii. 15.—2 Chron. v. 12. The heavenly visions, which are recorded in scripture, and which were intended for the more easy apprehension and instruction of those who were honoured with them, preserve an analogy in their imagery between themselves and the known objects of real life. Hence God, Christ, angels, and the spirits of the just, are represented as clothed in *white*, Dan. vii. 9. Luke ix 29. Acts i. x. and Rev. iii. 4.

Herod's design in arraying Christ in white is not known; and whether we ought with Causabon, in the following words, to find a *mystery* in it, we will not pretend to say. "Cum igitur vestis, apud veteres, regia pariter et sacerdotalis esset; quis *mysterio* factum a providentia divina non agnoscat; quod verus rex, verus sacerdos, a suis irrisoribus candida veste amicitur? Fuit, quidem, istorum animus pessimus: sed hoc veritatis significationem mysticam, neque hic, neque in crucis titulo lædebat." Exerc. in Bar. Annal. 8. 73. E. 16.

to offer to God at the feast. But the scripture doth not say, whether this affair occasioned the difference, that subsisted between the tetrach of the Jews and the Roman governor. In general, it was natural for these two men to be at enmity. On the one hand, the yoke which the Romans had put on all the nations of the earth, was sufficient to excite the impatience of all, except the natives of Rome; and to stir them up to perplex and to counteract the governors, whom they set over the countries which they had invaded. On the other, it must be acknowledged, that they who are deputed to govern conquered provinces, and for a time to represent the sovereign there, very seldom discharge their offices with mildness and equity. They are instantly infatuated with that shadow of royalty, to which they have not been accustomed; and hence come pride and insolence. They imagine they ought to push their fortune, by making the most of a rank from which they must presently descend; and hence come injustice and extortion. The reconciliation of Herod and Pilate is more surprizing than their discord.

We hasten to more important subjects. We will direct all your remaining attention to the examination of the text, *He stirreth up the people from Galilee to this place.* The doctrine of Jesus Christ hath always been accused of troubling society. They, who have preached truth and virtue, have always been accounted disturbers of the peace of society. I would enquire,

I. In what respects this charge is false; and in what respects it is true.

II. From the nature of those troubles which Jesus Christ, and his ministers, excite, I would derive an apology for christianity in general, and for a gospel ministry in particular; and prove that the troubling of society ought not to be imputed to those, who preach the doctrine of Christ, but to those who hear it.

III. As we are now between two days of solemn devotion, between a fast, which we have observed a few days ago, and a communion, that we shall receive a few days hence: I shall infer from the subject a few rules, by which you may know, whether you have kept the first of these solemnities, or whether you will approach the last, with suitable dispositions. Our text, you see, my brethren, will supply us with abundant matter for the remaining part of this exercise.

1. One distinction will explain our first article, and will shew us in what respects religion doth not disturb society, and in what respects it doth. We must distinguish what religion is in itself from the effects, which it produceth through the dispositions of those, to whom it is preached. In regard to the first, Jesus Christ is *the Prince of Peace.* This idea the prophets, this idea the angels, who announced his coming, gave of him. *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace;* this is what the prophets said of him, Isa. ix. 6. *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!* Luke ii. 14. This was the exclamation of the heavenly host, when they appeared to the shepherds. Jesus Christ perfectly answereth these descriptions.

Consider the kingdom of this divine Saviour, and you will find, that all his maxims are *peace*, and all tend to unity and concord; *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*, John xiii. 34. *Peace* is the inheritance he left to his disciples; peace *I leave with you, my peace I give unto you*, chap. xiv. 27. Peace between God and man; *being justified by faith we have peace with God*, Rom. v. 1. he hath reconciled *all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross*, Col. i. 20. Peace between Jews and Gentiles; *for he is our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; and came and preached peace to you, which were afar off, and to them that were nigh*, Eph. ii. 14. 17. *Peace* in the society of the first disciples; for *all that believed were together, and had all things common*, Acts ii. 44. *Peace* in the conscience; for without Jesus Christ trouble and terror surround us. Heaven is armed with lightnings and thunderbolts, the earth is under the curse, a terrible angel, with a flaming sword, forbids our access to the gate of paradise, and the stings of conscience are *the arrows of the Almighty; the poison whereof drinketh up the spirit*, Job vi. 4. But at the approach of Jesus Christ our miseries flee, and we listen to his voice, which cries to us, *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and ye shall find rest unto your souls*, Matt. ix. 28, 29.

But,

But, if religion, considered in itself, breathes only peace, it actually occasioneth trouble in society, through the dispositions of those, to whom it is preached. According to the general disposition of mankind, the religion of Jesus Christ must necessarily disgust, and therefore disturb, schools, courts, churches, and families; stirring up one minister against another minister, a confessor against a tyrant, a pastor against a people, a father against his family.

1. *Schools.* There were two celebrated schools in the days of Jesus Christ, the Pagan school, and the Jewish school. The Pagan schools were fountains of errors. They taught erroneous opinions of God, whose excellence they pretended to represent by figures of men, animals, and devils. They taught erroneous opinions of man, of whose origin, obligations, and end, they were totally ignorant. They taught erroneous opinions of morality, which they had adjusted, not according to the dictates of conscience, but agreeably to the suggestions of their own vicious hearts.

The Jewish schools, originally directed by a heavenly light, had not fallen into errors so gross: but they were not exempt, they had even embraced some capital mistakes. The fundamental article of the Jewish religion, that, on which depended all their hopes, and all their joys, I mean the doctrine of the Messiah, was precisely that, of which they had entertained the most false ideas. They represented to themselves a Messiah of flesh and blood, one adapted to the relish of human passions. They authorized the most criminal remissness, and violated the most inviolable rights of religion and nature. Revenge, in their opinion, was inseparable from man. Concupiscence was perfectly consistent with purity of heart. Perjury changed its nature, when it was accompanied with certain douceurs. Divorce was a prevention of discord, and one of the domestic rights of a married person.

The christian religion appears in the world, and it offers ideas of God, of man, of virtue, of the expected Messiah; other notions of concupiscence and revenge, of perjury, and of all the principal points of religion and morality. Christianity appears in the world. The Lord of the universe is no longer associated with other beings of the same kind. He is no longer an incestuous being, no more a parricide, an adulterer. He is a being alone in his essence, independent

dependent in his authority, just in his laws, wise in his purposes, and irresistible in his performances. Philosophy is folly. Epicurus proves himself an idiot, destitute of reason and intelligence, by not discovering the characters of intelligence and reason, that shine throughout all the universe, and by attributing to a fortuitous concourse of atoms the effects of wisdom the most profound, and of power infinite and supreme. Pythagoras is a master-dreamer, who seemeth to have contracted the stupidity of all the animals, the bodies of which his soul hath transmigrated. Zeno is an extravagant creature, who sinks the dignity of man by pretending to assign a false grandeur to him, and maketh him meaner than a beast, by affecting to set him a rival with God. The christian religion appears in the world. The Messiah is not a pompous formidable conqueror, whose exploits are all in favour of one single nation. Revenge is murder, concupiscence is adultery, and divorces are violations of the prerogatives of God, separating what he hath joined together, and subverting the order of the world and the church.

In this manner, christian theology undermined that of the Jewish rabbies, and that of the philosophers of paganism. It is easy to judge what their fury must be, when they saw their schools deserted, their pupils removed, their decisive tone reprimanded, their reputation sullied, their learning degenerated into ignorance, and their wisdom into folly. Have you any difficulty in believing this? Judge of what passed in former ages by what passeth now. As long as there are christians in the world, christianity will be divided into parties; and as long as christianity is divided into sects and parties, those divines, who resist preachers of erroneous doctrines, will render themselves odious to the followers of the latter. No animals in nature are so furious as an idiot in the habit of a divine, when any offers to instruct him, and a hypocrite when any attempts to unmask him.

2. Let us pass to our next article, and let us attend the doctrine of Christ to *court*. If the servants of Christ had stirred up no other enemies beside priests and rabbies, they might have left their adversaries to bawl themselves hoarse in their solitary schools; to hurl after the innocent, the anathemas, and thunders of synagogues and consistories; and each christian, despising their ill-directed discipline, might have appealed from the tribunal of such iniquitous judges to that of a sovereign God, and with a prophet might have

have said, *Let them curse: but bless, thou! when they arise: let them be ashamed,* Psal. cix. 28.

But the grandees of the world have often as false ideas of their grandeur and power, as pedants have of their jurisdiction and learning. Dizzy with the height and brightness of their own elevation, they easily imagine, the regal grandeur extends its government over the priestly censer, and gives them an exclusive right of determining articles of religion, and of enslaving those, whose parents and protectors they pretend to be. As if false became true, and iniquity just, by proceeding from their mouths, they pretend, that whatever they propose is therefore to be received, because they propose it. They pretend to the right of making maxims of religion as well as maxims of policy; and, if I may express myself so, of levying proselytes in the church, as they levy soldiers for the army, with colours flying, at the first word of command of HIS MAJESTY, for *such is our good pleasure.* They make an extraordinary display of this tyranny, when their consciences accuse them of some notorious crimes, which they have committed; and, as if they would wash away their sins with the blood of martyrs, they persecute virtue to expiate vice. It hath been remarked that the greatest persecutors of the church have been, in other cases, the least regular, and the most unjust of all mankind.

This was long ago observed by Tertullian, who in his *apology,* speaks thus: *We have never been persecuted,* says he, *except by princes, whose lives abounded with injustice and uncleanness, with infamous and scandalous practices; by those whose lives ye yourselves have been accustomed to condemn, and whose unjust decisions ye have been obliged to revoke, in order to re-establish the innocent victims of their displeasure**. Let us not insult our persecutors: but after the example of Jesus Christ, let us *bless them that curse us;* and *when we are reviled,* let us *not revile again,* Matt. v. 44. 1 Pet. ii. 23. Perhaps in succeeding

* Tertullian, in the chapter from which our author quotes the passage above, remarks, from the Roman historians, that Nero was the *first* who abused the imperial sword to persecute christians; that Domitian was the *second,* and then adds; *Tales* semper nobis *insecutores,* injusti, impri, turpes: quos et ipsi damnare consuestis, et a quibus damnatos ristituere soliti estis. Apol. cap. v.

succeeding ages posterity may make similar reflections on our sufferings; perhaps some may remark to our descendents what Tertullian remarked to the senate of Rome, on the persecutions of the primitive christians. I will not enlarge this article; but return to my subject. The religion of Jesus Christ hath armed a tyrant against a martyr; a combat worthy of our most profound considerations, in which the tyrant attacks the martyr, and the martyr the tyrant: but with very different arms. The tyrant with cruelty, the martyr with patience; the tyrant with blasphemy, the martyr with prayer; the tyrant with curses, the martyr with blessing; the tyrant with an inhuman barbarity, beyond the ferocity of the most fierce and savage animals, the martyr with an unshaken steadiness that elevates the man above humanity, and fills his mouth with songs of victory and benevolence, amidst the most cruel and barbarous torments.

3. I said, further, that the religion of Jesus Christ often occasioned troubles in *the church*, and excited the pastor againt the flock. The gospel-ministry, I mean, is such that we cannot exercise it, without often applying the fire and the knife to the wounds of some of our hearers. Yes! these ministers of the gospel, these heads of the mystical body of Christ, these fathers, these ambassadors of peace, these shepherds, to whom the scriptures give the kindest and most tender names; these are sometimes incendiaries and firebrands, who in imitation of their great master Jesus Christ, the *shepherd and bishop of souls, come to set fire on the earth*, 1 Pet. ii. 25. Luke xii. 49.

Two things will make this article very plain: consider our commission, and consider society. It is our *commission*, that we should suffer no murmuring in your adversities, no arrogance in your prosperities, no revenge under your injuries, no injustice in your dealings, no irregularity in your actions, no inutility in your words, no impropriety in your thoughts.

Society, on the contrary, forms continual obstacles against the execution of this commission. Here we meet with an admired wit, overflowing with calumny and treachery, and increasing his own fame by committing depredations on the characters of others. There we see a superb palace, where the family tread on azure and gold, glittering with magnificence and pomp, and founded on the ruins of the houses of widows and orphans. Yonder we behold

hearts

hearts closely united: but, alas! united by a criminal tie, a scandalous intelligence.

Suppose now a pastor, not a pastor by trade and profession, but a zealous and religious pastor; who judgeth of his commission, not by the revenue which belongeth to it, but by the duties which it obligeth him to perform. What is such a man? A fire-brand, an incendiary. He is going to sap the foundations of that house, which subsists only by injustice and rapine: he is going to trouble that false peace, and those unworthy pleasures, which the impure enjoy in their union; and so of the rest.

Among the sinners to whose resentment we expose ourselves, we meet with some whom birth, credit, and fortune have raised to a superior rank, and who hold our lives and fortunes in their hands. Moses findeth a Pharaoh; Elijah an Ahab, and a Jezebel; St. John Baptist a Herod, and an Herodias; St. Paul a Felix, and a Drusilla; St. Ambrose a Theodosius; St. Chrysostom an Eudoxia, or to use his own words, *another Herodias, who rageth afresh, and who demandeth the head of John Baptist again.* How is it possible to attack such formidable persons without arming society, and without incurring the charge of mutiny? Well may such putrified bodies shriek, when cutting, and burning, and actual cauteries are applied to the mortified parts! Well may the criminal roar when the judgments of God put his conscience on the rack!

4. But censure and reproof belong not only to pastors and leaders of flocks, they are the duties of all christians; christianity, therefore, will often excite troubles in *families.* A slight survey of each family will be sufficient to convince us, that each hath some prevailing evil habit, some infatuating prejudice, some darling vice. Amidst all these disorders, each christian is particularly called to censure, and to reprove; and each of our houses ought to be a church, in which the master should alternately execute the offices of priest and prince, and boldly resist those who oppose his maxims. Christian charity, indeed, requireth us to bear with one another's frailties. Charity maintains an union, notwithstanding differences on points that are not essential to salvation and conscience. Charity requireth us to become *to the Jews as Jews, to them that are without law as without law, to be made all things to all men,* 1 Cor. ix. 20, 21, 22. But after all, charity doth not allow us to tolerate the pernicious practices of all them, with whom we

are connected by natural, or social ties; much less doth it allow us to follow them down a precipice. And deceive not yourselves, my brethren, there is a moral as well as a doctrinal denial of Jesus Christ. It is not enough you know, to believe and to respect the truth inwardly; when the mouth is shut, and sentiments palliated, religion is denied. In like manner, in society, in regard to morals, it is not enough to know our duty, and to be guilty of reserves in doing it. If virtue be concealed in the heart; if through timidity or complaisance, people dare not openly profess it, they apostatize from the practical part of religion. Always when you fall in with a company of slanderers, if you content yourself with abhorring the vice, and conceal your abhorrence of it; if you outwardly approve what you inwardly condemn, you are apostates from the law, that forbids calumny. When your parents endeavour to inspire you with maxims opposite to the gospel, if you comply with them, you apostatize from the law, that saith, *we ought to obey God rather than men*, Acts vi. 29.

Such being the duty of a christian, who doth not see the troubles which the religion of Jesus Christ may excite in families? for I repeat it again, where is the society, where is the family, that hath not adopted its peculiar errors and vices? Into what society can you be admitted? With what family can you live? What course of life can you pursue, in which you will not be often obliged to contradict your friend, your superior, your father?

II. The explanation of our first article, hath almost been a discussion of the second; and by considering the nature of the troubles which religion occasions, we have in a manner proved, that they ought not to be imputed to those who teach this religion: but to them who hear and resist it. This is the apology for our gospel, for our reformation, and for our ministry. This is our reply to the objections of ancient and modern Rome.

One of the strongest objections that was made against *primitive christianity*, was taken from the troubles which it excited in society. "A religion, said some, that kindles a fire on earth; a religion, which withdraws subjects from the allegiance they owe to their sovereign; which requireth its votaries to hate father, mother, children; that exciteth people to quarrel with the gods themselves; a religion of this kind, can it be of heavenly original? Can it proceed from any

any but the enemy of mankind?" Blasphemy of this kind is still to be seen in a city of Spain *, where it remains on a column that was erected by Dioclesian, and on which we read these words: *To Dioclesian, Jovius, and Maximinus, Cæsars, for having enlarged the bounds of the empire, and for having exterminated the name of Christians, those disturbers of the public repose* †.

The enemies of our reformation adopt the sentiment, and speak the language of the ancient Romans. They have always this objection in their mouths: Your reformation was the source of schisms, and disturbances. It was that which armed the Condes, the Chatillons, the Williams: or to use the words of an historian ‡, who was educated in a society where the sincerity necessary to make a faithful historian is seldom acquired; *Nothing was to be seen*, says he, in speaking of the wars, which was excited under the detestable triumvirate §, *Nothing was to be seen but the vengeance of some, and the crimes of others, nothing but ruins, and ashes, blood, and carnage, and a thousand frightful images of death; and these were*, adds this venal pen, *these were the fruits of the new gospel, altogether contrary to that of Jesus Christ, who brought peace on earth, and left it at his death with his apostles.*

But I am pleased to see my religion attacked with the same weapons, with which Jesus Christ, and his apostles, were formerly attacked. And I rejoice to defend my religion with the same armour, with which the primitive christians defended it against the first enemies of christianity. To the gospel, then; or to the cruelty of tyrants, to the in-

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* Cluny.

† Grutery corpus Inscript. Tom I. p. 280.

‡ Father Maimbourg, in his history of Calvinism. Book iv.

§ The duke of Guise, the constable de Montmorenci, and the marshal de St. Andre. The jesuit, whose words our author quotes, is speaking of the reign of Henry II. in which the kingdom was governed, or rather disturbed, by the *triumvirate*, mentioned by Mr. Saurin. They, according to the president Thuanus, were governed by Diana of Poitiers, duchess of Valentinois, the king's mistress; and she by her own violent and capricious passions. *Hæc violenta et acerba regni initia, . . . facile ministris tributa sunt; præcipue Dianæ Pictaviensi, superbi et impotentis animi feminæ; . . .* HUJUS FEMINÆ ARBITRIO OMNIA REGEBANTUR. Thuan. hist. lib. 3. These were the *favourites* mentioned in our preface to the 1st. vol. page 9.

flexible pride of the priesthood, to the superstitious rage of the populace, ought these ravages to be imputed? What did the primitive christians desire, but liberty to worship the true God, to free themselves from error, to destroy vice, and to make truth and virtue triumph in every place? And we, who glory in following these venerable men, we ask, What treasons have we plotted? Rome! What designs hast thou seen us form? Have we attempted to invade thy property, to conquer thy states, to usurp thy crowns? Have we envied that pomp, which thou displayest with so much parade, and which dazzles thy gazing followers? What other spirit animates us, beside that of following the dictates of our own consciences, and of using our learning, and all our qualifications, to purify the christian world from its errors and vices? If the purity of our hands, if the rectitude of our hearts, if the fervour of our zeal, have provoked thee to lift up thine arm to crush us, and if we have been obliged to oppose thine unjust persecutions by a lawful self-defence; is it to us, is it to our reformation, is it to our reformers, that the discord must be ascribed?

That, which makes an apology for the reformation, and for the primitive gospel, makes it also for *a gospel-ministry*. It is sufficiently mortifying to us, my brethren, to be obliged to use the same armour against the children of the reformation, that we employ against the enemies of it. But this armour, how mortifying soever the necessity may be, that obligeth us to put it on, is an apology for our ministry, and will be our glory before that august tribunal, at which your cause, and ours, will be heard; when the manner, in which we have preached the gospel, and the manner, in which you have received our preaching, will be examined. How often have you given your pastors the same title, which the enemies of our reformation gave the reformers? I mean, that of disturbers of the peace of society. How often have you said of him, who undertook to shew you all the light of truth, and to make you feel all the rights of virtue, *He stirreth up the people?* But I ask again, ought the disturbances, which are occasioned by the preaching of the gospel, to be imputed to those who foment error, or to them, who refute it; to those, who censure vice, or to them, who eagerly and obstinately commit it? Is the discord to be attributed to those, who drown reason in wine, or to them, who shew the extravagance of drunkenness? Is it to those, who retain an unjust gain, or to them, who urge the necessity of restoring

restoring it? Is it to those, who prophane our solemn feasts, who are *spots* in our assemblies, as an apostle speaks, Jude 12. and who, in the language of a prophet, *defile our courts with their feet**, or to them, who endeavour to reform such abuses? To put these questions is to answer them. I shall, therefore, pass from them to our last article, and shall detain you but a few moments in the discussion of it.

III. We are now between two solemnities; between a fast, which we kept a few days ago, and a communion, that we shall receive a few days hence. I wish you would derive from the words of the text a rule to discover, whether you have attended the first of these solemnities, and whether you will approach the last, with suitable dispositions.

There is an opposition, we have seen, between the maxims of Jesus Christ and the maxims of the world; and consequently, we have been convinced, that a christian is called to resist all mankind, to stem a general torrent; and, in that eternal division, which separates the kingdom of Jesus Christ from the kingdom of sin in the world, to fight continually against the world, and to cleave to Jesus Christ. Apply this maxim to yourselves, apply it to every circumstance of your lives, in order to obtain a thorough knowledge of yourselves.

Thou! thou art a member of that august body, to which society commits in trust its honour, its property, its peace, its liberty, its life, in a word, its felicity. But with what eye do men of the world elevated to thy rank accustom themselves to consider these trusts? How often do these depositaries enter into tacit agreements reciprocally to pardon sacrifices of public to private interest? How often do they say one to another? *Wink you at my injustice to-day, and I will wink at yours to-morrow.* If thou enter into these iniquitous

* Isaiah i. 12. *Tread my courts.* The French version better, *que vous fouliez de vos pieds mes parvis.* Fouler aux pieds, is to trample on *by way of contempt.* The prophet meant to shew the imperfection of *exterior* worship; and probably our translators intended to convey the same idea by our phrase, Wherefore do ye *tread my courts?* as if he had said, "The worship of the *mind* and *heart* is essential to the *holiness* of my festivals; but you ONLY *tread my courts*; your bodies indeed are present; but your attention and affections are absent: you *defile* my courts, that is, you celebrate my festivals *unholily.*" See chap. xxix. 13.

quitous combinations, yea, if thou wink at those who form them; if thou forbear detecting them, for fear of the resentment of those, whose favour it is thine interest to conciliate: most assuredly thou art a false christian; most assuredly thy fast was a vain ceremony, and thy communion will be as vain as thy fast.

Thou! thou art set over the church. In a body composed of so many different members, it is impossible to avoid finding many enemies of Jesus Christ, some of whom oppose his gospel with erroneous maxims, and others with vices incompatible with christianity. If thou live in, I know not what, union with thy flock; if thou dare not condemn in public those, with whom thou art familiar in private; if thou allow in private what thou condemnest in public; if the fear of passing for *an innovator, a broacher of new opinions,* prevent thine opposing abuses, which custom hath authorized; and if the fear of being reputed *a reformer of the public,* prevent thine attacking the public licentiousness; if thou say, *Peace, peace, when there is no peace,* Ezek. xiii. 10. most assuredly thy fast was a vain ceremony, and thy communion will be a ceremony as vain as thy fast.

Thou! thou art a member of a family, and of a society, which doubtless have their portion of the general corruption, for, as I said before, each hath its particular vice, and its favourite false maxim: a maxim of pride, interest, arrogance, vanity. If thou be united to thy family and to thy society by a corrupt tie; if the fear, lest either should say of thee, *he is a troublesome fellow, he is a morose unsocial soul, he is a mopish creature,* prevent thy declaring for Jesus Christ: most assuredly thou art a false christian; most assuredly thy fast was a vain ceremony, and thy communion will be as vain as thy fast.

Too many articles might be added to this enumeration, my brethren. I comprise all in one, *the peace of society.* I do not say that peace, which society ought to cherish: but that peace, after which society aspires. It is a general agreement among mankind, by which they mutually engage themselves to let one another go quietly to hell, and, on no occasion whatever, to obstruct each other in the way. Every man, who refuseth to accede to this contract, (this refusal, however, is our calling) shall be considered by the world as a disturber of public peace.

Where, then, will be the christian's peace? Where, then, will the christian find the peace, after which he aspires? In another

another world, my brethren. This is only a tempestuous ocean, in which we can promise ourselves very little calm, and in which we seem always to lie at the mercy of the wind and the sea. Yes, which way soever I look, I discover only objects of the formidable kind. Nature opens to me scenes of misery. Society, far from alleviating them, seems only to aggravate them. I see enmity, discord, falshood, treachery, perfidy. Disgusted with the sight of so many miseries, I enter into the sanctuary, I lay hold on the horns of the altar, I embrace religion. I find, indeed, a sincerity in its promises. I find, if there be an enjoyment of happiness in this world, it is to be obtained by a punctual adherence to its maxims. I find, indeed, that the surest way of passing through life with tranquillity and ease is to throw one's self into the arms of Jesus Christ. Yet, the religion of this Jesus hath its crosses, and its peculiar tribulations. It leads me through paths edged with fires and flames. It raiseth up in anger against me my fellow-citizens, relations, and friends.

What consequences shall we derive from this principle? He, who is able and willing to reason, may derive very important consequences; consequences, with which I would conclude all our discourses, all our sermons, all our pleasures, all our solemnities; consequences, which I would engrave on the walls of our churches, on the walls of your houses, on the frontispieces of your doors, particularly, on the tables of your hearts. The consequences are these, That this is not the place of our felicity; that this world is a valley of tears; that man is in a continual warfare on earth; that nature with all its treasures, society with all its advantages, religion with all its excellencies, cannot procure us a perfect felicity on earth. Happy we! if the endless vicissitudes of the present world conduct us to rest in the world to come, according to this expression of the Spirit of God, *Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord, they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them*, Rev. xiv. 13. To God be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

CHRIST THE KING OF TRUTH.

JOHN xviii. 36, 37, 38.

Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world. . . . . Pilate said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?

HAVE you ever considered, my brethren, the plain conclusion, that resulteth from the two motives, which St. Paul addresseth to Timothy? Timothy was the apostle's favourite. The attachment, which that young disciple manifested to him, entirely gained a heart, which his talents had conciliated before. The apostle took the greatest pleasure in cultivating a genius, which was formed to elevate truth and virtue to their utmost height. Having guarded him against the temptations, to which his age, his character, and his circumstances, might expose him; having exhorted him to keep clear of the two rocks, against which so many ecclesiastics had been shipwrecked, ambition, and avarice; he adds to his instructions this solemn charge. *I give thee charge, in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment*, 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14. God quickeneth all things. Jesus Christ, before Pontius Pilate, witnessed a good confession. From the union of these two motives ariseth that conclusion, which I would remark to you.

The first may be called the motive of a philosopher: the second may be called the motive of a christian. A philosopher, I mean a man of sound reason, who finds himself placed a little while in this world, concludes, from the objects that surround him, that there is a Supreme Being, a *God who quickeneth all things.* His mind being penetrated with this truth, he cannot but attach himself to the service of the Supreme Being, whose existence and perfections he is able to demonstrate. He assures himself, that the same Being, whose power and wisdom adorned the firmament with stars, covered the earth with riches, and filled the sea with gifts of beneficence, will reward those, who sacrifice their inclinations to that obedience, which his nature requires.

But, let us own, my brethern, the ideas we form of the Creator are, in some sense, confounded, when we attend to the miseries, to which he seems to abandon some of his most devoted servants. How can the great Supreme, *who quickeneth all things*, leave those men to languish in obscurity and indigence, who live and move only for the glory of him? In order to remove this objection, which hath always formed insuperable difficulties against the belief of a God, and of a Providence, it is necessary to add the motive of a christian to that of a philosopher. This motive follows, that *God, who quickeneth all things,* who disposeth all events, who bestoweth a scepter, or a crook, as he pleaseth, hath wise reasons for deferring the happiness of his children to another œconomy; and hence a presumption ariseth, that he will give them a king, whose *kingdom is not of this world.* St. Paul joins this second motive to the first. *I give thee charge, in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.* What is this good confession? It is that which you have heard in the words of the text. Verily, *I am a king, to this end was I born*; but *my kingdom is not of this world.*

The first of these motives, my brethern, you can never study too much. It is a conduct unworthy of a rational soul, to be surrounded with so many wonders, and not to meditate on the author of them. But, our present circumstances, the solemnity of this season, and particularly the words of the text, engage us to quit at present the motive of a philosopher, and to reflect wholly on that of a christian. I exhort you to day, by that Jesus, who declared himself *a king*, and who at the same time said, *My kingdom is not of this*

this world, to endeavour to divert your attention from the miseries and felicities of this world, to which the subjects of the Messiah do not belong. This is the chief, this is the only point of view, in which we shall now consider the text. We will omit several questions, which the words have occasioned, which the disputes of learned men have rendered famous, and, on which, at other times, we have proposed our sentiments; and we will confine ourselves to three sorts of reflections.

I. We intend to justify the idea, which Jesus Christ giveth of his kingdom, and to prove this proposition, *My kingdom is not of this world.*

II. We will endeavour to convince you, that the kingdom of Jesus Christ is therefore a kingdom of *truth*, because it is not a kingdom of this world.

III. We will inquire whether there be any in this assembly, who are *of the truth*, and who *hear the voice* of Jesus Christ; whether this king, whose *kingdom is not of this world*, have any subjects in this assembly. To these three reflections we shall employ all the moments of attention, with which you shall think proper to indulge us.

I. Let us justify the idea, which Jesus Christ giveth us of his kingdom, and let us prove the truth of this proposition, *My kingdom is not of this world.* To these ends, let us remark the end of this king, his maxims, his exploits, his arms, his courtiers, and his rewards.

1. Remark the *end*, the design, of this king. What is the end of the kingdoms of this world? They are directed to as many different ends, as there are different passions, which prevail over the minds of those, who are elevated to the government of them. In a Sardanapalus, it is to wallow in sensuality. In a Sennacherib, it is to display pomp and vain glory. In an Alexander, it is to conquer the whole world.

But let us not be ingenious to present society to view by its disagreeable sides. To render a state respectable, to make trade flourish, to establish peace, to conquer in a just war, to procure a life of quiet and tranquillity for the subjects, these are the ends of the kingdoms of this world. Ends worthy of sovereigns, I own. But, after all, what are all these advantages, in comparison of the grand sentiments, which the Creator hath engraven on our souls? What relation do they bear to that unquenchable thirst for happiness,

which all intelligent beings feel? What are they when the lightning darts, and the thunder rolls in the air? What are they when conscience awakes? What are they when we meet death, or what is their value when we lie in the tomb? Benevolence, yea humanity, I grant, should make us wish our successors happy: but, strictly speaking, when I die, all dies with me. Whether society enjoy the tranquil warmth of peace, or burn with the rage of faction and war; whether commerce flourish, or decline; whether armies conquer their foes, or be led captives themselves: each is the same to me. *The dead know not any thing. Their love, and their hatred, and their envy is perished: neither have they any more a portion for ever in anything that is under the sun,* Eccles. ix. 5, 6.

The end of the kingdom of Jesus Christ is of another kind. Represent to yourselves the divine Saviour in the bosom of God, himself *the blessed God.* He cast his eyes down on this earth. He saw prejudices blinding the miserable sons of Adam, passions tyrannizing over them, conscience condemning them, divine vengeance pursuing them, death seizing and devouring them, the gulphs of hell yawning to swallow them up. Forth he came to make prejudice yield to demonstration, darkness to light, passion to reason. He came to calm conscience, to disarm the vengeance of heaven, to *swallow up death in victory,* 1 Cor. xv. 54. and to close the mouth of the infernal abyss. These are the designs of the king Messiah, designs too noble, too sublime, for earthly kings. *My kingdom is not of this world.*

2. The *maxims* of this kingdom agree with its end. What are the maxims of the kingdoms of this world? I am ashamed to repeat them, and I am afraid, if I suppress them, of betraying the truth. Ah! why did not the maxims of such as Hobbes and Machiavel vanish with the impure authors of them! Must the christian world produce partisans, and apologists for the policy of hell! These are some of their maxims. "Every way is right that leads to a throne. Sincerity, fidelity, and gratitude, are not the virtues of public men, but of people in private life. The safety of the people is the supreme law. Religion is a bridle to subjects: but kings are free from its restraints. There are some illustrious crimes."

The maxims of Jesus Christ are very different. *Justice, and judgment, are the basis of a throne. Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsars, and unto God the things*

things that are God's. Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added to you. Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. Let your communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil, Psal. lxxx. 14. Matt. xxii. 21. vi. 33. vii. 12. and v. 37.

3. The *exploits* of the kingdom of Jesus Christ accomplish his designs. He doth not employ such artillery, as the kings of the earth do to reduce whole cities to ashes. His soldiers use none of those formidable engines of death in his wars, which are called *the final reasons of kings.* His forces are strangers to that desperate avidity of conquest, which makes worldly generals aim to attain inaccessible mountains, and to penetrate the climes that have never been trodden by the footsteps of men. His exploits are, neither the forcing of intrenchments, nor the colouring of rivers with blood, nor the covering of whole countries with carcases, nor the filling of the world with carnage, and terror, and death.

The exploits of the Messiah completely effect the end of his reign. He came, we just now observed, to dissipate prejudice by demonstration, and he hath gloriously accomplished his end. Before the coming of Jesus Christ, philosophers were brute beasts: since his coming, brute beasts are become philosophers. Jesus Christ came to conquer our tyrannical passions, and he hath entirely effected his design. He renovated disciples, who rose above the appetites of sense, the ties of nature, and the love of self; disciples who at his word, courageously forsook their property, their parents, and their children, and voluntarily went into exile: disciples, who *crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts,* Gal. v. 24. generous disciples, who sacrificed their lives for their brethren, and sometimes for their persecutors; disciples, who triumphed over all the horrors, while they suffered all the pains, of gibbets, and racks, and fires. Jesus Christ came to calm conscience, and to disarm divine justice, and his designs hath been perfectly answered. The church perpetually resounds with *grace, grace unto it,* Zech. iv. 7. The penitent is cited before no other tribunal than that of mercy. For thee, converted sinner! there are only declarations of absolution and grace. Jesus Christ came to conquer death, and he hath manfully fulfilled his purpose. Shall we still fear death, after he hath *brought*

life

life and immortality to light by the gospel? 2 Tim. i. 10. Shall we still fear death, after we have seen our Saviour loaden with its spoils? Shall we yet fear death, while he crieth to us in our agony, *Fear not, thou worm Jacob, fear not, for I am with thee*, Isa. xli. 14. 10.

4. Let us consider the *arms* which Jesus Christ hath employed to perform his exploits. These arms are his cross, his word, his example, and his Spirit.

The enemies of Jesus Christ considered the day of his *crucifixion* as a triumphant day. They had solicited his execution with an infernal virulence. But how much *higher are the ways of God than the ways of men, and his thoughts than their thoughts*, Isa. lv. 9. From this profound night, from this hour of darkness, which covered the whole church, arose the most reviving light. Jesus Christ, during his crucifixion, most effectually destroyed the enemies of our salvation. Then, *having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it*, Col. ii. 15. Then he offered to the God of love a sacrifice of love, to which God could refuse nothing. Then, he placed himself, as a rampart, around sinners, and received in himself the artillery that was discharged against them. Then he demanded of his Father, not only by his cries and tears, but by that blood which he poured out in the richest profusion of love, the salvation of the whole world of the elect, for whom he became incarnate.

To the power of his cross, add that of his *word*. He had been introduced in the prophecies speaking thus of himself; *he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, and like a polished shaft*, Isa. xlix. 2. And he is elsewere represented as having *a sharp, two-edged sword*, proceeding out of *his mouth*, Rev. i. 16 Experience hath fully justified the boldness of these figures. Let any human orator be shewn, whose eloquence hath produced equal effects, either in persuading, or in confounding, in comforting, confiming, or conciliating the hearts of mankind, and in subduing them by its irresistible charms. Had not Jesus Christ, in all these kinds of elocution, an unparalleled success?

The force of his word was corroborated by the purity of his *example*, He was a model of all the virtues, which he exhorted others to observe. He proposed the re-establishment of the empire of order, and he first submitted to it. He preached a detachment from the world, and he *had not where to lay his head*. He preached meekness and humility

lity, and he was himself *meek and lowly in heart, making himself of no reputation, and taking upon him the form of a servant.* He preached benevolence, and *he went about doing good.* He preached patience, and *when he was reviled he reviled not again:* He suffered himself to be *led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers was dumb, so he opened not his mouth,* Matt. viii. 20. ix. 29. Phil. ii. 7. Acts. x. 38. 1 Pet. ii. 23. and Isa. liii. 7. He preached the cross and he bore it. What conquests cannot a preacher make, when he himself walks in that path of virtue, in which he exhorts others to go?

Finally, Jesus Christ useth the arms of the Spirit, I mean miracles; and with them he performeth the exploits of which we speak. To these powerful arms Jesus Christ and his disciples teach all nature to yield; tempests subside; devils submit; diseases appear at a word, and vanish on command; death seizeth, or lets fall his prey; Lazarus riseth; Elymas is stricken blind; Ananias and Sapphira die sudden and violent deaths. Moreover, with these all-conquering arms, he converteth unbelieving souls; he planteth the gospel; openeth the heart; worketh faith; writeth the law in the mind; enlighteneth the understanding; createth anew; regenerateth and sanctifieth the souls of men; he exerciseth that omnipotence over the moral void, that he exercised in the first creation, over the chaos of natural beings, and raiseth a new world out of the ruins of the old.

5. Let us attend to the *courtiers* of the king Messiah. Go to the courts of earthly princes; behold the intriguing complaisance, the feigned friendships, the mean adulations, the base arts, by which courtiers rise to the favour of their prince. Jesus Christ hath promised his to very different dispositions. And to which of his subjects hath he promised the tenderest and most durable union? Hear the excellent reply, which he made to those who told him his mother and brethren desired to speak with him. *Who is my mother? And who are my brethren?* said he, and stretching forth his hand toward his disciples, he added, *Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father, which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother,* Matt. xii. 48.—50. Fraternal love, devotedness to the will of God, the most profound humility, are the dispositions that lead to the heart of Jesus Christ. How impossible to arrive at the favour of earthly kings by such dispositions as these!

Finally

Finally, The great proof, my brethren, that the *kingdom* of Jesus Christ *is not of this world*, is taken from its *rewards*. Virtue, I grant, sometimes procureth temporal prosperity to those who practise it. The sacred authors have proposed this motive, in order to attach men to the laws of Jesus Christ. *Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is*, as well as *of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. *He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips, that they speak no guile, let him eschew evil, and do good, let him seek peace, and ensue it*, 1 Pet iii. 10, 11.

One would suppose, St. Peter's thought might be amplified, and that we might add, *Would any man acquire a fortune?* Let him be punctual to his word, just in his gains, and generous in his gifts. *Would any man become popular in his reputation?* Let him be grave, solid, and cautious. *Would any man rise to the highest promotions in the army?* Let him be brave, magnanimous, and expert in military skill. *Would any one become prime minister of state?* Let him be affable, incorruptible, and disinterested. But may I venture to say it? This morality is fit only for a hamlet now a-days; it is impracticable on the great theatres of the world, and so great is the corruption of these times, we must adopt a contrary style. *Who would acquire a fortune?* Let him be treacherous and unjust, let him be concentred in his own interest. *Who would become popular, and would have a crouded levee?* Let him be a shallow intriguing self-admirer. *Who would occupy the first posts in the army?* Let him flatter, let him excel in the art of substituting protection and favour in the place of real merit.

What conclusion must we draw from all these melancholy truths? The text is the conclusion, *my kingdom is not of this world*. No, christian, by imitating thy Saviour, thou wilt acquire neither riches nor rank: thou wilt meet with contempt, and shame, poverty, and pain! But peace of conscience, a crown of martyrdom, an eternal *mansion in the Father's house*, John xiv. 2. the society of angels, the heavenly Jerusalem, these are the rewards which Jesus Christ himself reaped, and these he hath promised thou shalt reap!

II. We have proved that the *kingdom* of Jesus Christ *is not of this world*, we will proceed now to prove, that it is therefore a kingdom of *truth*. *Thou sayest that I am a king;*

king; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.

What is this *truth?* Two ideas may be formed of it. It may be considered, either in regard to the Jews who accused Christ before Pilate; or in regard to Pilate himself, before whom Jesus Christ was accused.

If we consider it in regard to the Jews, this *truth* will respect the grand question, which was then in dispute between Jesus Christ and them; that is, Whether he were the Messiah, whom the prophets had foretold.

If we consider it in regard to Pilate, and to the pagan societies, to which this Roman governor belonged, a more general notion must be formed of it. The pagan philosophers pretended to enquire for *truth*, some of them affected to have discovered it, and others affirmed that it could not be discovered, that all was uncertain, that finite minds could not be sure of any thing, except that they were sure of nothing. This was particularly the doctrine of Socrates. Some learned men have thought that the last was Pilate's system, and by this hypothesis, they explain his reply to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ said to him, *I came to bear witness to the truth.* Pilate answered, *What is truth?* Can frail men distinguish truth from falshood? How should they know truth?

Whether this be only a conjecture or not, I affirm, that let the term *truth* be taken in which of the two senses it will, Jesus Christ came to bear witness to truth in both senses; and that his is a kingdom of truth, because it is not a kingdom of this world: whence it follows, that there are some truths of which we have infallible evidence.

The *kingdom* of Jesus Christ *is not of this world:* therefore Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah. The Jews meet with nothing in christianity equal in difficulty to this; and their error in this article, it must be acknowledged, claims our patience and pity.

The prophets have attributed a sceptre to Jesus Christ, an emblem of the regal authority of temporal kings: *Thou shalt break them with a sceptre of iron** They attributed

* Thou shalt break them with a *rod* of iron. Our author uses the French version, Tu les froisseras avec un *sceptre* de fer. The Hebrew word is put *literally* for a common *walking-stick*, Exod. xxi. 19. A *rod* of correction, Prov. x. 13. The *staff* that

to him a throne, the seat of temporal kings: *thy throne, O God! is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre*, Psal. xlv. 6. They attributed to him the armies of a temporal king: *thy people shall be willing in the day when thou shalt assemble thine army in holy pomp*, Psal. cx. 3.* They attributed to him homages, like those which are rendered to a temporal king: *they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust*, Psal. lxxii. 9. They attributed to him the subjects of a temporal king; *ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession*, Psal. ii. 8. They attributed to him the prosperity of a temporal king: *the kings of Tarshish, and of the isles, shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts*, Psal. lxxii. 10. They attributed to him the exploits of temporal kings: he shall *strike through kings in the day of his wrath; he shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies, he shall wound the heads over many countries*, Psal. cx. 5, 6. They even foretold, that the king promised to the Jews should carry the glory of his nation to a higher degree than it had ever attained under its most successful princes.

How could the Jews know our Jesus by these descriptions, for he was only called a king in derision, or at most, only the vile populace seriously called him so? Our Jesus had no other sceptre than a reed, no other crown than a crown of thorns, no other throne than a cross; and the same may be said of the rest. Never was an objection seemingly more unanswerable, my brethren: Never was an objection really more capable of a full, entire, and conclusive solution. Attend to the following considerations:

1. Those predictions, which are most incontestible in the ancient prophecies, are, that the sceptre of the Messiah was to be *a sceptre of righteousness*, Psal. xlv. 6. Heb. i. 8. and that they who would enjoy the felicities of his kingdom, must devote themselves to virtue. They must be humble, and

that was carried by the head of a tribe, or by a magistrate, as an ensign of his office, Gen. xlix. 10. The *sceptre* of a prince, and indeed for a rod, or staff, *of any kind*. It is put *figuratively* for *support*, *affliction*, *power*, &c. The epithet *iron* is added to express a *penal* exercise of power, as that of *golden* is to signify a *mild* use of it.

* See the note, page 83.

and *in lowliness of mind, each must esteem other better than himself*, Phil. ii. 3. They must be clement toward their enemies, *do good to them that hate them, and pray for them which persecute them*, Matt. v. 44. They must subdue the rebellion of the senses, subject them to the empire of reason, and *crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts*, Gal. v. 24. But of all the means that can be used to subjugate us to those virtues, that which we have supposed, is the most eligible; I mean the giving of a spiritual and metaphorical sense to the ancient prophecies. What would be the complexion of the kingdom of the Messiah, were it to afford us all those objects which are capable of flattering and of gratifying our passions? Riches would irritate our avarice. Ease would indulge our sloth and indolence. Pomp would produce arrogance and pride. Reputation would excite hatred and revenge. In order to mortify these passions, the objects must be removed by which they are occasioned or fomented. For the purpose of such a mortification, a cross is to be preferred before a bed of down, labour before ease, humiliation before grandeur, poverty before wealth.

2. To give a literal meaning to the prophecies which announce the kingdom of Christ, is to make them *contradict themselves*. Were terrestrial pomp, were riches and human grandeurs, always to attend the Messiah, what would become of those parts of the prophecies, which speak with so much energy of his humiliation and sufferings? What would become of the prophecy which God himself gave to the first man, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpents head:* but indeed *the serpent shall bruise his heel?* What would become of this prophetic saying of the psalmist, *I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people?* Psal. xxii. 6. What would become of this prophecy of Isaiah, *He hath no form nor comeliness; when we shall see him, there is no beauty, that we should desire him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not*, chap. liii. 2, 3. Whether, to free ourselves from this difficulty, we say, with some Jews, that the prophets speak of two Messiahs; or with others, dispute the sense in which even the traditions of the ancient Rabbies explained these prophecies, and deny that they speak of the Messiah at all: in either case we plunge ourselves into an ocean of difficulties. It is the only kingdom of our Jesus, that uniteth the grandeur and the meanness, the glory and the ignominy, the immortality and the death, which the ancient prophets fore-

told would be found in the kingdom, and in the person of the Messiah.

3. *The prophets themselves have given the keys of their prophecies* concerning the Messiah. *Behold! the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts,* Jer. xxxi. 31, 33. And again, *I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God; and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen,* Hos. i. 7. What is that covenant which engageth to *put* the divine *law in the hearts* of them with whom it is made? What is this salvation, which is procured *neither by bow nor by sword?* Where is the unprejudiced man, who doth doth not perceive that these passages are clues to the prophecies, in which the Messiah is represented as exercising a temporal dominion on earth?

4. *If there be any thing literal* in what the prophets have foretold of the eminent degree of temporal glory to which the Messiah was to raise the Jewish nation; if the distinction of St. Paul, of *Israel after the flesh,* 1 Cor. x. 18. from *Israel after the spirit,* Rom. ix. 3, 6. be verified in this respect; if the saying of John the Baptist, *God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham,* Matt. iii. 9. if, in one word, as we said before, there be any thing literal in those prophecies, *we expect a literal accomplishment of them.* Yes! we expect a period in which the king Messiah will elevate the Jewish nation to a more eminent degree of glory than any to which its most glorious kings have ever elevated it. The heralds of the kingdom of our Messiah, far from contesting the pretensions of the Jews on this article, urged the truth and the equity of them. *I say then,* (these are the words of St. Paul writing on the rejection of the Jews) *I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall?* Rom. xi. 11, 12. God forbid! *But rather through their fall salvation is come unto the gentiles for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the gentiles: how much more their fulness?*

St. Paul establisheth in these words two callings of the Gentiles: a calling, which was a reproach to the Jewish nation, and a calling, which shall be the glory of that nation. That calling, which was a reproach to the Jews, was occasioned

sioned by their infidelity; *the fall of them was the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles:* that is to say, the apostles, disgusted at the unbelief of the Jews, preached the gospel to the Pagan world.

But here is a second calling mentioned, which will be glorious to the Jews, and this calling will be occasioned by the return of the Jews to the covenant, and by their embracing the gospel. The Gentiles, to whom the gospel had not been preached before, will be so stricken to see the accomplishment of those prophecies, which had foretold it; they will be so affected to see the most cruel enemies of Jesus Christ become his most zealous disciples, that they will be converted through the influence of the example of the Jews. *If the fall of them,* if the fall of the Jews, were *the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles: how much more their fulness?* This is an article of faith in the christian church.

This furnisheth us also with an answer to one of the greatest objections, that was ever made against the christian system, touching the spiritual reign of the Messiah. A very ingenious Jew hath urged this objection; I mean the celebrated *Isaac Orobio.* This learned man, through policy, had professed the Catholic religion in Spain: but, after the fear of death had made him declare himself a christian, in spite of the most cruel tortures, that the inquisition could invent, to make him own himself a Jew; at length he came into these provinces to enjoy that amiable toleration, which reigns here, and not only profsssed his own religion, but defended it, as well as he could, against the arguments of christians. Offended at first with the gross notions, which his own people had formed of the kingdom of the Messiah; and mortified at seeing how open they lay to our objections, he endeavoured to refine them. "We expect, says he, a "temporal kingdom of the Messiah, not for the gratifying "of our passions, not for the acquisition of riches, neither "for the obtaining of eminent posts, nor for an easy life in "this world: but for the glory of the God of Israel, and "for the salvation of all the inhabitants of the earth, who, "seeing the Jews loaden with so many temporal blessings, "will be therefore induced to adore that God, who is the "object of their worship*." My brethren, apply the reflection,

* This learned Jew was of Saville in Spain, and, after he had escaped from the prison of the inquistion by pretending to be

flection, that you just now heard, to this ingenious objection.

5. If the glory of the king Messiah do not shine so brightly in the present œconomy, as to answer the ideas which the prophet have given of it; *we expect to see it shine with unexampled lustre after this œconomy ends.* When we say that the *kingdom* of the Messiah *is not of this world,* we are very far from imagining that this world is exempted from his dominion. We expect a period, in which our Jesus, sitting on the clouds of heaven in power and great glory, elevated in the presence of men and angels, will appear in tremendous glory to all those, *who pierced him,* Rev. i. 7. and will enter into a strict scrutiny concerning the most horrible homicide, that was ever committed. We expect a period, in which the plaintive voices of the *souls under the altar,* will be heard, chap. vi. 9. a period, in which they will reign with him, and will experience ineffable transports, in casting their crowns at his feet, in singing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, and in *saying, Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him,* chap. xix. 6, 7. And we do not expect these excellent displays, merely because they delight our imaginations, and because we have more credulity than means of conviction, and motives of credibility. No such thing. The miracles, which our Jesus hath already wrought, are pledges of others, which he will hereafter perform. The extensive conquests, that he hath obtained over the Pagan world, prove those, which he will obtain over the whole universe. The subversion of the natural world, which sealed the divinity of his first advent, demonstrates that, which will signalize his second appearance.

The

be a christian, practised physic at Amsterdam. There he professed Judaism, and endeavoured to defend it against christianity in a dispute with professor Limborch. The passage quoted by Mr. Saurin, is the last of four objections, which he made against the christian religion. The whole was published by Limborch, under the title, *De veritate religionis christianæ amica collatio cum erudito Judæo.* Gouda. 4to. 1687. The inquisitors exasperated this celebrated Jew, Limborch confuted him: but neither converted him; for he thought that *every one ought to continue in his own religion*; and said, *if he had been born of parents, who worshipped the sun, he should not renounce that worship.*

The kingdom of the Messiah *is not of this world*, therefore it is a kingdom of truth, therefore Jesus Christ is the Messiah promised by the prophets. In explaining the prophecies thus, we give them not only the most just, but also the most sublime sense, of which they are capable. To render those happy who should submit to his empire, was the end of his coming. But, let us not forget, every idea of solid happiness must be regulated by the nature of man.

What is man? He is a being divested of his privileges, degraded from his primitive grandeur, and condemned by the supreme order and fitness of things to everlasting misery.

Again, What is man? He is a being, who, from that depth of misery into which his sins have already plunged him, and in sight of that bottomless abyss into which they are about to immerse him for ever, crieth, *O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death*, Rom. vii. 24.

Once more, What is man? He is a being, who, all disfigured and debased as he is by sin, yet feels some sentiments of his primæval dignity, still conceives some boundless wishes, still forms some immortal designs, which time can by no means accomplish.

This is man! Behold his nature! I propose now two comments on the ancient prophecies. The interpretation of the synagogue, and the interpretation of the christian church: the commentary of the passions, and that of the gospel. I imagine two Messiahs, the one such as the synagogue thought him, the other such as the disciples of Jesus Christ represent him. I place man between these two Messiahs, and I demand, which of these two heroical candidates would a rational man choose for his guide? Which of these two conquerors will conduct him to solid felicity? The first presents objects to him, sensible, carnal, and gross: The second proposeth to detach him from the dominion of sense, to elevate him to ideas abstract, and spiritual, and, by alluring his soul from the distractions of earthly things, to impower him to soar to celestial objects. The one offereth to open as many channels for the passions, as their most rapid flow may require: the other to filtrate the passions at the spring, and to keep all in proper bounds by giving to each its original placid course. The one proposeth to march at the head of a victorious people, to animate them by his valour and courage, to enable them to rout armies, to take garrisons,

garrisons, to conquer kingdoms: The other offereth to disarm divine justice; like David, to go weeping *over the brook Cedron*, 2 Sam. xv. 23. John xviii. 1. to ascend Mount Calvary; to *pour out his soul* an offering on the cross, Isa. liii. 12. and, by these means, to reconcile heaven and earth, I ask, Who, the Jews, or we, affix the most sublime meaning to the predictions of the prophets? I ask, Whether, if the choice of either of these Messiahs were left to us, the christian Messiah would not be infinitely preferable to the other? Our Jesus, all dejected and disfigured as he is, all covered as he is with his own blood, is he not a thousand times more conformable to the wishes of a man, who knows himself, than the Messiah of the Jews, than the Messiah of the passions, with all his power, and with all his pomp?

III. It only remains to examine, my brethren, whether this Jesus, whose *kingdom is not of this world*, have many subjects. But alas! To put this question is to answer it; for where shall I find the subjects of this Jesus, whose *kingdom is not of this world?* I seek them first among the people, to whom *were committed the oracles of God*, Rom. iii. 2. and who grounded all their hopes on the coming of the king Messiah. This nation, I see, pretends to be offended and frightened at the sight of a spiritual king, whose chief aim is to conquer the passions, and to tear the love of the world from the hearts of his subjects. Hark! they cry, *We will not have this man to reign over us! Away with him, away with him! Crucify him, crucify him! His Blood be on us and on our Children!* Luke xix. 14. John xix. 15. and Matt. xxvii. 25.

I turn to the metropolis of the christian world. I enter the vatican, the habitation of the pretended successor of this Jesus, whose *kingdom is not of this world;* and lo! I meet with guards, drummers, ensigns, light-horse, cavalcades, pompous equipages in peace, instruments of death in war, habits of silver and keys of gold, a throne and a triple crown, and all the grandeur of an earthly court. I meet with objects far more scandalous than any I have seen in the synagogue.

The synagogue refuseth to attribute a spiritual meaning to the gross and sensible emblems of the prophets: but Rome attributes a gross and sensible meaning to the spiritual emblems of the gospel. The prophets had foretold, that the Messiah should hold a scepter in his hand; and the synagogue

gogue rejected a Messiah, who held only a reed. But the gospel tells us, the Messiah held only a reed, and Rome will have a king, who holdeth a scepter. The prophets had said Christ should be crowned with glory; and the synagogue rejected a king, who was crowned only with thorns. But the gospel represents Jesus Christ crowned with thorns; and Rome will have a Jesus crowned with glory, and placeth a triple crown on the head of its pontiff. The first of these errors appears to me more tolerable than the last. *Judah hath justified her sister Samaria*, Ezek. xvi. 51. 52. Rome is, on this article, less pardonable than Jerusalem.

Where then is the kingdom of our Messiah? I turn toward you, my brethren; I come in search of christians into this church, the arches of which incessantly resound with pleas against the pretensions of the synagogue, of the passions, and of Rome. But alas! within these walls, and among a congregation of the children of the reformation, how few disciples do we find of this Jesus, whose *kingdom is not of this world?*

I freely grant, that *kingdom which is not of this world*, engageth us to so much mortification, to so much humility, and to so much patience; and that we are naturally so sensual, so vain, and so passionate, that it is not very astonishing, if in some absent moments of a life, which in general is devoted to Jesus Christ, we should suspend the exercise of those graces. And, I grant, further, that when, under the frailties, which accompany a christian life, we are conscious of a sincere desire to be perfect, of making some progress toward the attainment of it, of genuine grief when we do not advance apace in the road, that our great example hath marked out, when we resist sin, when we endeavour to prevent the world from stealing our hearts from God; we ought not to despair of the truth of our christianity.

But, after all, *the kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world.* Some of you pretend to be christians; and yet you declare coolly and deliberately, in your whole conversation and deportment, for worldly maxims diametrically opposite to the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

The kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world. You pretend to be christians; and yet you would have us indulge and approve of your conduct, when you endeavour to distinguish yourselves from the rest of the world, not by humility, moderation, and benevolence: but by a worldly grandeur, made up of pomp and parade.

The kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world. You pretend to be christians; and although your most profound application, your most eager wishes, and your utmost anxieties, are all employed in establishing your fortune, and in uniting your heart to the world, yet you would not have us blame your conduct.

The kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world. You pretend to be christians, and yet you are offended, when we endeavour to convince you by our preaching, that whatever abates your ardour for spiritual blessings, how lawful soever it may be in itself either the most natural inclination, or the most innocent amusement, or the best intended action, that all become criminal when they produce this effect.

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world. You affect to be christians; and yet, you think, we talk very absurdly, when we affirm that whatever contributes to loosen the heart from the world, whether it be the most profound humiliation, poverty the most extreme, or maladies the most violent, any thing, that produceth this detachment, ought to be accounted a blessing. You murmur, when we say, that the state of a man living on a dunghill, abandoned by all mankind, living only to suffer; but, amidst all these mortifying circumstances, praying, and praising God, and winding his heart about eternal objects; is incomparably happier than that of a worldling, living in splendour and pomp, surrounded by servile flatterers, and riding in long processional state.

But open your eyes to your real interests, and learn the extravagance of your pretensions. One, of two things, must be done to satify us, Either Jesus Christ must put us in possession of the felicities of the present world, while he enables us to hope for those of the world to come; and then our fondness for the first would cool our affection for the last, and an immoderate love of this life would produce a disrelish for the next: or, Jesus Christ must confine his gifts, and our hopes, to the present world, and promise us nothing in the world to come, and then our destiny would be deplorable indeed.

Had we hope only in this life, whither should we flee in those moments, in which our minds, glutted and palled with worldly objects, most clearly discover all the vanity, the emptiness, and the nothingness of them?

Had we hope only in this life, whither could we flee when the world shall disapper; when *the heavens shall pass*

pass away with a great noise, when *the elements shall melt with fervent heat*, when *the earth, and all its works shall be burnt up?* 2 Pet. iii. 10.

Had we hope only in this life, whither could we flee when the springs of death, which we carry in our bosoms, shall issue forth and overwhelm the powers of life? What would become of us a few days hence, when, compelled to acknowledge the nullity of the present world, we shall exclaim, Vanity of vanities, all is vanity?

Ah! I am hastening to the immortal world, I stretch my hands toward the immortal world, I feel, I grasp, the immortal world; I have no need of a Redeemer, who reigns in this present world; I want a Redeemer, who reigns in the immortal world! My finest imaginations, my highest prerogatives, my most exalted wishes, are the beholding of a reigning Redeemer, in the world to which I go; the sight of him sitting on the throne of his Father; the seeing of *the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, falling down before him, and casting their crowns at his feet*, Rev. iv. 9, 10. the hearing of the melodious voices of the triumphant hosts, saying, *Glory be unto him, that sitteth upon the throne*, chap. v. 13. The most ravishing object, that can present itself to my eyes in a sick-bed, especially in the agonies of death, when I shall be involved in darkness that may be felt, is my Saviour, looking at me, calling to me, animating me, and saying, *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.* But what would all this be? Jesus Christ will do more. He will give me power to conquer, and he will crown me when the battle is won. May God grant us these blessings! Amen.

SERMON VIII.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

PSALM cxviii. 15, 16.

The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly.

WOMAN! *why weepest thou?* John xx. 13, 15. was the language of two angels and of Jesus Christ to Mary. The Lord had been crucified. The infant church was in mourning. The enemies of christianity were triumphing. The faith of the disciples was tottering. Mary had set out before dawn of day, to give vent to her grief, to bathe the tomb of her Master with tears, and to render funeral honours to him. In these sad circumstances, the heavens opened, two angels clothed in white garments descended, and placed themselves on the tomb, that inclosed the dear depositum of the love of God to the church. At the fixed moment, they rolled away the stone, and Jesus Christ arose from the grave loaden with the spoils of death. Hither Mary comes to see the dead body, the poor remain of him, *who should have redeemed Israel*, Luke xxiv. 21. and finding the tomb empty, abandons her whole soul to grief, and bursts into floods of tears. The heavenly messengers directly address these comfortable words to her, *Woman! Why weepest thou?* Scarcely had she told them the cause of her grief, before Jesus puts the same question to her, *Woman! Why weepest thou?* And to this language, which insinuateth into her heart, and exciteth, if I may venture to speak so, from the bottom of her soul every emotion of tenderness and love, of which she is capable, he adds, *Mary!*

This

This is the magnificent, this is the affecting object, on which the eyes of all the church are this day fixed. This is the comfortable language which heaven to-day proclaims. For several weeks past you have been in tears. Your churches have been in mourning. Your eyes have beheld only sad and melancholy objects. On the one hand, you have been examining your consciences, and your minds have been overwhelmed with the sorrowful remembrance of broken resolutions, violated vows, and fruitless communions. On the other, you have seen Jesus, betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, forsaken by all; Jesus, delivered by priests to secular powers, and condemned by his judges to die; Jesus, *sweating, as it were, great drops of blood,* Luke xxii. 44. praying in Gethsemane: *O my Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,* Matt. xxvi. 39. and crying on Mount Calvary, *My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?* chap. xxvii. 46. Jesus, lying in the grave: these have been the mournful objects of your late contemplation. At the hearing of this tragical history, conscience trembles; and the whole church, on seeing the Saviour intombed, weeps as if salvation were buried with him. But take courage, thou tremulous conscience! Dry up thy tears, thou church of Jesus Christ! *Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Sion!* Isa. lii. 2. Come, my brethren, approach the tomb of your Redeemer, no more to lament his death, no more to embalm his sacred body, which hath not been *suffered to see corruption,* Acts. ii. 27. but to shout for joy at his resurrection. To this the prophet inviteth us in the text: *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly.*

I have not questioned, whether the psalm in general, and the text in particular, regard the Messiah. The ancient Jews understood the psalm of him; and therefore made use of it formerly among their prayers for his advent. We agree with the Jews, and on this article, we think they are safer guides than many christians. The whole psalm agrees with Jesus Christ, and is applicable to him as well as to David, particularly the famous words that follow the text: *The stone which the builders refused, is become the head-stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes.* These words are so unanimously applied to the exaltation, and particularly to the resurrection, of Jesus Christ,

in

in the books of the new testament, in the gospel of St. Matthew, in that of St. Mark, in that of St. Luke, in the book of Acts, in the epistle to the Romans, and in that to the Ephesians, that it seems needless, methinks, to attempt to prove a matter so fully decided.

The present solemnity demands reflections of another kind, and we will endeavour to shew you,

I. The truth of the event of which the text speaks; *The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly.*

II. We will justify the joyful acclamations, which are occasioned by it; *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.*

I. Let us examine the evidences of the *truth* of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Infidelity denies it, and what perhaps may be no less injurious to christianity, superstition pretends to establish it on falshood and absurdity. A certain traveller * pretends, that the inhabitants of the holy land still shew travellers *the stone which the builders refused*, and which became *the head-stone of the corner*. In order to guard you against infidelity, we will urge the arguments, which prove the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ: but in order to prevent superstition, we will attribute to each argument no more evidence than what actually belongs to it.

In proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have, 1. Presumption. 2. Proofs. 3. Demonstrations. The circumstances of his burial afford some presumptions; the testimonies of the apostles furnish us with some arguments; and the descent of the holy Spirit on the church furnisheth us with demonstrations.

1. From the circumstances of the burial of Jesus Christ, I derive some *presumptions* in favour of the doctrine of the resurrection. Jesus Christ died. This is an incontestible principle. Our enemies, far from pretending to question this, charge it on christianity as a reproach.

The tomb of Jesus Christ was found empty a few days after his death. This is another incontestible principle. For if the enemies of christianity had retained his body in their possession, they would certainly have produced it for the ruin of

* Peter Belon. Observ. lib. ii. cap. 83. Belon was a countryman of our author's, a physician of Le Mans, who travelled from 1546 to 1549. His travels were published 1555.

of the report of his resurrection. Hence ariseth a presumption that Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

If the body of Jesus Christ were not raised from the dead, it must have been stolen away. But this theft is incredible. Who committed it? The enemies of Jesus Christ? Would they have contributed to his glory, by countenancing a report of his resurrection? Would his disciples? It is probable, they would not: and, it is next to certain, they could not. How could they have undertaken to remove the body? Frail and timorous creatures, people, who fled as soon as they saw him taken into custody; even Peter, the most courageous, trembled at the voice of a servant girl, and three times denied that he knew him; people of this character, would they have dared to resist the authority of the governor? Would they have undertaken to oppose the determination of the Sanhedrim, to force a guard, and to elude, or to overcome, soldiers armed and aware of danger? If Jesus Christ were not risen again, (I speak the language of unbelievers) he had deceived his disciples with vain hopes of his resurrection. How came the disciples not to discover the imposture? Would they have hazarded themselves, by undertaking an enterprize so perilous, in favour of a man, who had so cruelly imposed on their credulity?

But were we to grant that they formed the design of removing the body, how could they have executed it? How could soldiers, armed, and on guard, suffer themselves to be over-reached by a few timorous people? *Either*, says St. Augustine,† *they were asleep, or awake: If they were awake, why should they suffer the body to be taken away? If asleep, how could they know that the disciples took it away? How dare they then depose that it was stolen?* All these, however, are only presumptions.

The testimony of the apostles furnisheth us with *arguments*, and there are eight considerations, which give their evidence sufficient weight. Remark the *nature*, and the *number*, of the witnesses: The *fact* they avow, and the *agreement* of their evidence: The *tribunals*, before which they stood, and the *time*, in which they made their depositions: The *place*, where they affirmed the resurrection, and their *motives* for doing so.

consider

† Serm. ii. in Psal. xxxvi.

1. Consider *the nature of these witnesses.* Had they been men of opulence and credit in the world, we might have thought, that their reputation gave a run to the fable. Had they been learned and eloquent men we might have imagined, that the style, in which they told the tale, had soothed the souls of the people into a belief of it. But, for my part, when I consider that the apostles were the lowest of mankind, without reputation to impose on people, without authority to compel, and without riches to reward: when I consider, that they were mean, rough, unlearned men, and consequently very unequal to the task of putting a cheat upon others; I cannot conceive, that people of this character could succeed in deceiving the whole church.

2. Consider *the number of these witnesses.* St. Paul enumerates them, and tells us, that Jesus Christ *was seen of Cephas*, 1 Cor. xv. 5, &c. This appearance is related by St. Luke, who saith, *the Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon*, chap. xxiv. 34. The apostle adds, *then* he was seen *of the twelve:* This is related by St. Mark, who saith, *he appeared unto the eleven*, chap. xvi. 14. it was the same appearance, for the apostles retained the appellation *twelve*, although, after Judas had been guilty of suicide, they were reduced to *eleven*. St. Paul adds further, *after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethern at once:* Jesus Christ promised this appearance to the women, *Go into Galilee, and tell my brethren, that they shall see me there*, Matt. xxviii. 10. St. Luke tells us in the first chapter of Acts, that the church consisted of *about an hundred and twenty* members; this was the church at Jerusalem: but the greatest part of the *five hundred*, of whom St. Paul speaks, were of Galilee, where Jesus Christ had preached his gospel, and where these converts abode after his resurrection. The apostle subjoins, *after that he was seen of James;* this appearance is not related by the evangelists: but St. Paul knew it by tradition.* St. Jerom writes, that in a Hebrew gospel,

* Two of our Lord's apostles were named *James*. The *elder* of the two, brother of John, was put to death by Herod, Acts xii. 2. The other, who was first cousin to Jesus Christ, was called the *less*, the *younger* probably, and lived many years after. It is not certain which of the two St. Paul means If he mean the *first*, he had the account of the appearing of the Lord to him, probably, as Mr. Saurin says, by *tradition*: If the *last*, it is likely, he had it from James himself; for him he *saw* at Jerusalem, Gal. i. 19. and he was living in the year 57, when St. Paul wrote this first epistle to the Corinthians.

attributed to St. Matthew, called *The Gospel of the Nazarenes*, it was said, *Jesus Christ appeared to St. James*; that, this apostle having made a vow neither to eat nor drink till Jesus should rise from the dead, the divine Saviour took bread and broke it, took wine and poured it out, and said to him, *Eat and drink, for the son of man is risen from the dead**. St. Paul yet adds further, *Then he was seen of all the apostles; and, last of all, of me also, as of one born out of due time.* So numerous were the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ! from this fact we derive a second argument; for had the witnesses been few, it might have been said, that the base design of deceiving the whole church was formed by one, and propagated by a few more; or that some one had fancied he saw Jesus Christ: but when St. Paul, when the rest of the apostles, when *five hundred brethren* attest the truth of the fact; what room remains for suspicion and doubt?

3. Observe *the facts themselves, which they avow*, Had they been metaphysical reasonings, depending on a chain of principles and consequences; had they been periods of chronology, depending on long and difficult calculations; had they been distant events, which could only have been known by the relations of others; their reasonings might have been suspected: But they are facts, which are in question, facts, which, the witnesses declared, they had seen with their own eyes,

* The gospel, of which Mr. Saurin, after St. Jerom, speaks, is now lost. It was probably one of those mangled, interpolated, copies of the true gospel of St. Matthew, which, through the avidity of the lower sort of people to know the history of Jesus Christ, had been transcribed, and debased, and was handed about the world. I call it *mangled*; because some parts of the *true* gospel were *omitted*. I call it *interpolated*; because *some* things were *added from other gospels*, as the history of the woman caught in adultery, from St. John: Euseb. Eccl. hist. lib. iii. cap. 39. and *others from report*, as the above passage relative to James, &c. This book was written in Syriac. with Hebrew characters, St. Jerom translated it into Greek, and Latin, and divers of the fathers quote it, as Hegesippus, Euseb. E. H. lib. iv. 22. Ignatius Ep. and Smyrnenses, Edit. Userii, p. 112. Clement of Alexandria, Stromat. lib. ii. p. 278, Edit. Lugdun. 1616. Origen, St. Jerom, &c. It went by the names of the gospel according to St. *Matthew*, the gospel according to the *Hebrews*, the gospel of the *twelve apostles*, the gospel of the *Nazarenes*. See Luke i. 1, 2.

eyes at divers places, and at several times. Had they seen Jesus Christ? Had they touched him? Had they sitten at table, and eaten with him? Had they conversed with him? All these are questions of fact: it was impossible they could be deceived in them.

4. Remark *the agreement of their evidence.* They all unanimously deposed, that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. It is very extraordinary, that a gang of five hundred impostors, (I speak the language of infidels) a company, in which there must needs be people of different capacities and tempers, the witty and the dull, the timid and the bold; it is very strange, that such a numerous body as this should maintain an unity of evidence. This, however, is the case of our witnesses. What christian ever contradicted himself? What christian ever impeached his accomplices? What christian ever discovered this pretended imposture?

5. Observe *the tribunals, before which they gave evidence*, and the innumerable multitude of people by whom their testimony was examined, by Jews and Heathens, by philosophers and Rabbies, and by an infinite number of people, who went annually to Jerusalem: For, my brethren, Providence, so ordered these circumstances, that the testimony of the apostles might be unsuspected. Providence continued Jerusalem forty years after the resurrection of our Lord, that all the Jews in the world might examine the evidence concerning it, and obtain authentic proof of the truth of christianity. I repeat it again, then, the apostles maintained the resurrection of Jesus Christ before Jews, before Pagans, before philosophers, before Rabbies, before courtiers, before lawyers, before people expert in examining, and in cross-examining witnesses, in order to lead them into self-contradiction. Had the apostles borne their testimony in consequence of a pre-concerted plot between themselves, is it not morally certain that, as they were examined before such different and capable men, some one would have discovered the pretended fraud?

6. Consider *the place, in which the apostles bore their testimony.* Had they published the resurrection of the Saviour of the world in distant countries, beyond mountains and seas, it might have been supposed, that distance of place, rendering it extremely difficult for their hearers to obtain exact information, had facilitated the establishment of the error: But the apostles preached in Jerusalem, in the synagogues, in the pretorium; they unfolded and displayed the banners

of their master's cross, and set up tokens of his victory, on the very spot, on which the infamous instrument of his sufferings had been set up.

7. Observe *the time of this testimony.* Had the apostles first published this resurrection several years after the epocha, which they assigned for it; unbelief might have availed itself of the delay: but three days after the death of Jesus Christ, they said, he was risen again, and they re-echoed their testimony in a singular manner at Pentecost, when Jerusalem expected the spread of the report, and endeavoured to prevent it; while the eyes of their enemies were yet sparkling with rage and madness; and while Calvary was yet dyed with the blood they had spilt there. Do impostors take such measures? Would not they have waited till the fury of the Jews had been appeased, till judges, and public officers, had been changed, and till people had been less attentive to their depositions!

8. Consider, lastly, *the motives, which induced the apostles to publish the resurrection of Jesus Christ.* Survey the face of the world, examine all the impostures, that are practised in society. Falshood, imposition, treachery, perjury, abound in society. To every different trade and profession some peculiar deceptions belong. However, all mankind have one design in deceiving, they all deceive for their own interest. Their interests are infinitely diversified: but it is interest, however, that always animates all deceivers. There is one interest of pride, another of pleasure, a third of profit. In the case before us the nature of things is subverted, and all our notions of the human heart contradicted. It must be pre-supposed, that, whereas other men generally sacrifice the interest of their salvation to their temporal interest, the apostles, on the contrary, sacrified their temporal interest without any inducement from the interest of salvation itself. Suppose, they had been craftily led, during the life of Jesus Christ, into the expectation of some temporal advantages, how came it to pass, that, after they saw their hopes blasted, and themselves threatened with the most rigorous punishments, they did not redeem their lives by confessing the imposture? In general, the more wicked a traitor is, the more he trembles, alters, and confesses, at the approach of death. Having betrayed, for his own interest, the laws of his country, the interests of society, the confidence of his prince, and the credit of religion, he betrays the companions of his imposture, the accomplices of his crimes. Here, on the contrary,

trary, the apostles persist in their testimony till death, and sign the truths they have published with the last drops of their blood. These are our arguments.

We proceed now to our *demonstrations*, that is, to the miracles, with which the apostles sealed the truth of their testimony. Imagine these venerable men addressing their adversaries on the day of the christian pentecost in this language. "You refuse to believe us on our depositions; five "hundred of us, you think, are enthusiasts, all infected "with the same malady, who have carried our absurdity so "far as to imagine that we have seen a man, whom we have "not seen; eaten with a man, with whom we have not "eaten; conversed with a man, with whom we have not "conversed: or perhaps you think us impostors, or take us "for madmen, who intend to suffer ourselves to be impri-"soned, and tortured, and crucified, for the sake of en-"joying the pleasure of deceiving mankind, by prevailing "upon them to believe a fanciful resurrection: you think we "are so stupid as to act a part so extravagant. But bring "out your sick; present your demoniacs; fetch hither "your dead. Confront us with Medes, Parthians, and "Elamites; let Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Egypt, Phrygia, "Pamphylia, let all nations and people send us some of "their inhabitants, we will restore hearing to the deaf, and "sight to the blind, we will make the lame walk, we will "cast out devils, and raise the dead. We, we publicans, we "illiterate men, we tent makers, we fishermen, we will dis-"course with all the people of the world in their own lan-"guages. We will explain prophecies, elucidate the most "obscure predictions, develope the most sublime mysteries, "teach you notions of God, precepts for the conduct of "life, plans of morality and religion, more extensive, more "sublime, and more advantageous, than those of your priests "and philosophers, yea than those of Moses himself. We "will do more still. We will communicate these gifts to "you, *the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, "the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, prophecy, "discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, interpre-"tation of tongues*, 1 Cor. xii. 8, &c. all these shall be "communicated to you by your ministry."

All these things the apostles professed; all these proofs they gave of the resurrection of Jesus Christ; *this Jesus hath God raised up; and he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear*, Acts ii. 32, 33. This consideration furnisheth

furnisheth us with an answer to the greatest objection, that was ever made to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and, in general, to his whole œconomy. "How is it," say unbelievers sometimes, "that your Jesus exposed all the circumstances of his abasement to the public eye, and concealed those of his elevation? If he were transfigured on the mount it was only before Peter, James, and John. If he ascended to heaven, none but his disciples saw his ascent. If he rose again from the dead, and appeared, he appeared only to those, who were interested in his fame. Why did he not shew himself to the synagogue? Why did he not appear to Pilate? Why did he not shew himself alive in the streets, and public assemblies, of Jerusalem? Had he done so, infidelity would have been eradicated, and every one would have believed his own eyes: but the secrecy of all these events exposeth them to very just suspicions, and giveth plausible pretexts to errors, if errors they be."

We omit many solid answers to this objection; perhaps we may urge them on future occasions, and at present we content ourselves with observing, that the apostles, who attested the resurrection of Jesus Christ, wrought miracles in the presence of all those, before whom, you say, Jesus Christ ought to have produced himself after his resurrection. The apostles wrought miracles; behold Jesus Christ! see his Spirit! behold his resurrection! *God hath raised up Jesus Christ, and he hath shed forth what ye now see and hear.* This way of proving the resurrection of Christ was as convincing as the shewing of himself to each of his enemies would have been; as the exposure of his wounds before them, or the permitting of them to thrust their hands into his side, would have been. Yea this was a more convincing way, than that would have been, for which you plead. Had Jesus Christ shewn himself they might have thought him a phantom, or a counterfeit; they might have supposed, that a resemblance of features had occasioned an illusion: but what could an unbeliever oppose against the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead, the expulsion of devils, the alteration and subversion of all nature?

It may be said, perhaps, all these proofs, if indeed they ever existed, were conclusive to them, who, it is pretended, saw the miracles of the apostles; but they can have no weight with us, who live seventeen centuries after them. We reply, The miracles of the apostles cannot be doubted without

without giving into an universal scepticism; without establishing this unwarrantable principle, that we ought to believe nothing but what we see; and without taxing three sorts of people, equally unsuspected, with extravagance on this occasion.

1. They, who call themselves *the operators of these miracles*, would be chargeable with extravagance. If they wrought none, they were impostors, who endeavoured to deceive mankind. If they were impostors of the least degree of common sense, they would have used some precautions to conceal their imposture. But see how they relate the facts, of the truth of which we pretend no doubt. They specify times, places, and circumstances. They say, such and such facts passed in such cities, such public places, such assemblies, in sight of such and such people. Thus St. Paul writes to the Corinthians. He directs to a society of christians in the city of Corinth. He tells them, that they had received miraculous gifts, and censures them for making a parade of them. He reproves them for striving to display, each his own, gifts in their public assemblies. He gives them some rules for the regulation of their conduct in this case. *If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course, and let one interpret. If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church. Let the prophets speak, two, or three. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace*, 1 Cor. xiv. 27, 28, &c. I ask, with what face could St. Paul have written in this manner to the Corinthians, if all these facts had been false? If the Corinthians had received neither *the gifts of prophecy*, nor *the discerning of spirits*, nor *divers kinds of tongues*. What a front had he, who wrote in this manner?

2. *The enemies of Christianity* must be taxed with extravagance. Since christians gloried in the shining miracles, that their preachers wrought; and since their preachers gloried in performing them before whole assemblies, it would have been very easy to discover their imposture, had they been impostors. Suppose a modern impostor, preaching a new religion, and pretending to the glory of confirming it by notable miracles, wrought in this place: What method should we take to refute him? Should we affirm that miracles do not prove the truth of a doctrine? Should we have recourse to miracles wrought by others? Should we not exclaim against the fraud? Should we not appeal

peal to our own eyes? Should we want any thing more than the dissembler's own professions to convict him of imposture? Why did not the avowed enemies of christianity, who endeavoured by their publications to refute it, take these methods? How was it, that Celsus, Porphyry, Zosimus, Julian the apostate, and Hierocles, the greatest antagonists, that christianity ever had, and whose writings are in our hands, never denied the facts: but, allowing the principle, turned all the points of their arguments against the consequences, that christians inferred from them? By supposing the falshood of the miracles of the apostles, do we not tax the enemies of christianity with absurdity?

In fine, This supposition chargeth *the whole multitude of christians, who embraced the gospel,* with extravagance. The examination of the truth of religion, now, depends on a chain of principles and consequences, which require a profound attention: and therefore, the number of those, who profess such or such a religion, cannot demonstrate the truth of their religion. But in the days of the apostles the whole depended on a few plain facts. Hath Jesus Christ communicated his Spirit to his apostles? Do the apostles work miracles? Have they the power of imparting miraculous gifts to those, who embrace their doctrine? And yet this religion, the discussion of which was so plain and easy, spread itself far and wide. If the apostles did not work miracles, one of these two suppositions must be made: either these proselytes did not deign to open their eyes, but sacrificed their prejudices, passions, educations, ease, fortunes, lives and consciences, without condescending to spend one moment on the examination of this question; Do the apostles work miracles? or that, on supposition they did open their eyes, and did find the falshood of these pretended miracles, they yet sacrificed their prejudices, and their passions, their educations, their ease, and their honour, their properties, their consciences, and their lives, to a religion, which wholly turned on this false principle, that its miracles were true.

Collect all these proofs together, my brethren, consider them in one point of view, and see how many extravagant suppositions must be advanced, if the resurrection of our Saviour be denied. It must be supposed, that guards, who had been particularly cautioned by their officers, sat down to sleep, and that, however they deserved credit when they said the body of Jesus Christ was stolen: it must be supposed, that men who had been imposed on in the most odious

and

and cruel manner in the world, hazarded their dearest enjoyments for the glory of an impostor. It must be supposed that ignorant and illiterate men, who had neither reputation, fortune, nor eloquence, possessed the art of fascinating the eyes of all the church. It must be supposed, either that five hundred persons were all deprived of their senses at a time; or that they were all deceived in the plainest matters of fact; or that this multitude of false witnesses had found out the secret of never contradicting themselves, or one another; and of being always uniform in their testimony. It must be supposed, that the most expert courts of judicature could not find out a shadow of contradiction in a palpable imposture. It must be supposed, that the apostles, sensible men in other cases, chose precisely those places, and those times which were the most unfavourable to their views. It must be supposed, that millions madly suffered imprisonments, tortures, and crucifixions, to spread an illusion. It must be supposed, that ten thousand miracles were wrought in favour of falshood: or all these facts must be denied, and then it must be supposed, that the apostles were idiots, that the enemies of christianity were idiots, and that all the primitive christians were idiots.

The arguments that persuade us of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, are so clear and so conclusive, that if any difficulty remain, it ariseth from the brightness of the evidence itself. Yes, I declare, if any thing has shaken my confidence in it, it hath arisen from this consideration. I could not conceive how a truth, attested by so many irreproachable witnesses, and confirmed by so many notorious miracles, should not make more proselytes, how it could possibly be, that all the Jews, and all the heathens, did not yield to this evidence. But this difficulty ought not to weaken our faith. In the folly of mankind its solution lies. Men are capable of any thing to gratify their passions, and to defend their prejudices. The unbelief of the Jews and heathens is not more wonderful than a hundred other phœnomena, which, were we not to behold them every day, would equally alarm us. It is not more surprizing than the superstitious veneration, in which, for many ages, the christian world held that dark, confused, pagan genius, Aristotle; a veneration, which was carried so far, that when metaphysical questions were disputed in the schools, questions on which every one ought always to have liberty to speak his opinion; when they were examining whether there were a void in nature, whether nature ab-

horred a vacuum, whether matter were divisible, whether there were atoms, properly so called; when it could be proved, in disputes of this kind, that Aristotle was of such or such an opinion, his infallibility was allowed, and the dispute was at end. The unbelief of the ancients is not more surprizing than the credulity of the moderns: We see kings, and princes, and a great part of christendom, submit to a pope, yea to an inferior priest, often to one who is void of both sense and grace. It is not more astonishing than the implicit faith of christians, who believe, in an enlightened age, in the days of Descartes, Paschal and Malbranche; what am I saying? Descartes, Paschal, and Malbranche themselves believe, that a piece of bread, which they reduce to a pulp with their teeth, which they taste, swallow, and digest, is the body of their Redeemer. The ancient unbelief is not more wonderful than yours, protestants! You profess to believe there is a judgment, and a hell, and to know that misers, adulterers, and drunkards, must suffer everlasting punishments there, and although you cannot be ignorant of your being in this fatal list, yet you are as easy about futurity, as if you had read your names in the book of life, and had no reason to entertain the least doubt of your salvation.

II. We have urged the arguments, that prove the resurrection of Jesus Christ: I shall detain you only a few moments longer in justifying the joyful acclamations which it produced, *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly.*

The three melancholy days that passed between the death of Jesus Christ and his resurrection, were days of triumph for the enemies of the church. Jesus Christ riseth again; and the church triumphs in its turn: *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous. The right hand of the Lord doth valiantly.*

1. In those melancholy days, *heresy triumphed over truth.* The greatest objection that was made against the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, was taken from his innocence, which is the foundation of it. For if Jesus Christ were innocent, where was divine justice when he was overwhelmed with sufferings, and put to death? Where was it, when he was exposed to the unbridled rage of the populace? This difficulty

difficulty seems at first indissoluble. Yea, rather let all the guilty perish; rather let all the posterity of Adam be plunged into hell; rather let divine justice destroy every creature that divine goodness hath made, than leave so many virtues, so much benevolence, and so much fervour, humility so profound, and zeal so great, without indemnity and reward. But when we see that Jesus Christ, by suffering death, disarmed it, by lying in the tomb took away its sting, by his crucifixion ascended to a throne, the difficulty is diminished, yea, it vanisheth away: *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly.* God and man are reconciled; divine justice is satisfied; henceforth we may go *boldly to the throne of grace. There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again,* Heb. iv. 16. Rom. viii. 1, 32, 34.

2. In those mournful days *infidelity triumphed over faith.* At the sight of a deceased Jesus the infidel displayed his system by insulting him, who sacrificed his passions to his duty, and by saying; See, See, that pale motionless carcase: *Bless God and die* ! All events come alike to all, there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to*

* So the French bibles render the words; BLESS *God and die!* our translation hath it, CURSE *God and die.* Job, who best knew his wife, calls this a *foolish* saying; that is, a saying void of *humanity* and *religion:* for so the word foolish signifies in scripture. It was a cruel popular sarcasm, frequently cast by sceptics on those who persisted in the belief of a God, and of the perfection and excellence of his providence, even while he suffered them to sink under the most terrible calamities. "Your God is the God of universal nature! He regards the actions of men! He rewards virtue! He punishes vice! On these erroneous principles your adoration of him has been built. This was a pardonable folly in the time of your prosperity; but what an absurdity to persist in it now! If your present sufferings do not undeceive you, no future means can. Your mind is past information. Persevere! *Go on in your adoration till you die.*"

It may seem strange at first, that the same term should stand for two such opposite ideas as *blessing* and *cursing:* but a very plain and natural reason may be assigned for it. The Hebrew word originally signified *to bless, (benedicere):* and when applied

the clean and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good, so is the sinner, and

plied to *God*, it meant *to bless*, that is, *to praise* God by *worshipping* him. The Talmudists say, that the religious honours which were paid to God, were of four sorts. The prostration of the whole body was one: The bowing of the head another: The bending of the upper part of the body towards the knees a third; and *genuflexion* the fourth. Megillæ fol. 22. 2. apud Buxtorff. Lex. In these ways was God *praised*, *worshipped*, or *blessed*, and the Hebrew word for blessing was naturally put for *genuflexion*, the *expression* of blessing, or praising: thus it is rendered Psalm xcv. 6. let us *kneel* before the Lord: 2 Chron. vi. 13. Solomon *kneeled* down upon his knees. The bending of the knee being a usual *token of respect*, which people paid *to one another*, when they met, the word was transferred to this also, and is properly *salute*: 2 Kings iv. 19. If thou meet any man *salute* him not. The same token of respect being parting, the word was also applied to that: They *blessed* Rebekah, that is *they bade her farewel*, accompanying their good wishes with *genuflection*. From this known meaning of the word, it was applied to a bending of the knee where no blessing could be intended; he made his camels *kneel down*, Gen. xxiv. 11. It was put sometimes for the respect, that was paid to a magistrate, Gen. xli. 43. and sometimes for the respect, which idolaters paid to false gods. But to *bow the knee* to an *idol* was to *deny the existence of God*, to renounce his *worship*, or, in the scripture style, to *curse* God, to *blaspheme* God, &c. *If I beheld the sun, or the moon, and my mouth hath kissed my hand; I should have denied the God, that is above*, Job xxxi. 26, 27, 28. Only the scope of the place, therefore, can determine the precise meaning of the word. The word must be rendered *curse*, *deny*, God, or *renounce his worship*, Job i. 5. 11. and it must be rendered *bless*, *acknowledge*, or *worship* him, in ver. 21. The Septuagint, after a long sarcastic paraphrase, supposed to have been spoken by Job's wife, renders the phrase ειπον τι ρημα προς κυριον, και τελευτα. To bring our meaning into a narrow compass. If an ancient Jew had seen a *dumb* man bend his knee in the *tabernacle*, or in the *temple*, he would have said he *blessed the* LORD. Had he seen him, bend his knee at *court* in the presence of Solomon, he would have said he *blessed*, that is, he *saluted the* KING. And had he seen him bend his knee in a *house of Baal*, or in an *idolatrous grove*, he would have said, he *blessed an* IDOL; or, as the embracing of idolatry was the renouncing of the worship of the true God, he would have said, he *cursed* JEHOVAH. We have ventured this conjecture to prevent any prejudices against the English bible, that may arise from the seemingly uncertain meaning of some Hebrew words.

and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath, Eccles. ix. 2. Jesus Christ riseth from the dead: *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.* The system of the infidel sinks: *he errs, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God*, Matt. xxii. 29.

In those dismal days, *tyranny triumphed over the perseverance of martyrs.* Innocence was oppressed, and the rewards of virtue seemed to be buried in the tomb of him, who, above all others, had devoted himself to it. Jesus Christ riseth again: *The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous.* The designs of the enemies of innocence are all frustrated, and their attempts to disgrace purity serve only to exalt its glory, and to perpetuate its memory. Let the tyrants of the church, then, rage against us; let *the gates of hell*, Matt. xvi. 18. consult to destroy us; let the kings *of the earth*, more furious ofmer than hell itself, *set themselves against the Lord and against his anointed*, Psal. ii. 2. let them set up gibbets, let them equip galleys, let them kindle fires to burn us, and prepare racks to torture us; they themselves, and all their cruel inventions, shall serve the purposes of the almighty God: The *Assyrian is* only *the rod of his anger*, Isa. x. 5. *Herod and Pilate do* only *what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done*, Acts iv. 28. God knoweth how to restrain their fury, and to say to them, as he saith to the ocean, *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed*, Job xxxviii. 2.

4. Finally, in those fatal days, *death triumphed over all human hope of immortal glory.* The destiny of all believers is united to that of Jesus Christ. He had said to his disciples, *because I live, ye shall live also*, John xiv. 19 In like manner, on the same principle, we may say, If he be dead, we are dead also. And how could we have hoped to live, if he who is our life, had not freed himself from the state of the dead? Jesus Christ riseth from the dead. *The voice of rejoicing is in the tabernacles of the righteous.* Nature is re-instated in its primæval dignity; *death is swallowed up in victory*, 1 Cor. xv. 54. the grave is disarmed of its sting. Let my eye-sight decay; let my body bow under the weight of old age; let the organs of my body cease to perform their wonted operations; let all my senses fail; let death sweep away the dear relatives *of* my *bosom*, and my *friends, who are as mine own soul*, Deut. xiii. 6. let these eyes, gushing with tears, attended with sobs, and sorrows, and

and groans, behold her expire, who was my company in solitude, my counsel in difficulty, my comfort in disgrace; let me follow to the grave the bones, the carcase, the precious remains of this dear part of myself; my converse is suspended, but is not destroyed; *Lazarus, my friend, sleepeth, but if I believe, I shall see the glory of God.* Jesus Christ is *the resurrection and the life*, John xi. 2, 40, 25. He is risen from the dead, we therefore shall one day rise. Jesus Christ is not a private person, he is a public representative, he is the surety of the church, *the first fruits of them that sleep. If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you*, 1 Cor. xv. 20. Rom. viii. 2.

Was ever joy more rational? Was triumph ever more glorious? The triumphant entries of conquerors, the songs that rend the air in praise of their victories, the pyramids on which their exploits are transmitted to posterity, when they have subdued a general, routed an army, humbled the pride, and repressed the rage of a foe; ought not all these to yield to the joys that are occasioned by the event which we celebrate to day? Ought not all these to yield to the victories of our incomparable Lord, and to his people's expressions of praise? One part of the gratitude, which is due to beneficial events, is to know their value, and to be affected with the benefits which they procure.

Let us celebrate the praise of the author of our redemption, my brethren; let us call heaven and earth to witness our gratitude. Let an increase of zeal accompany this part of our engagements. Let a double portion of fire from heaven kindle our sacrifice; and with a heart penetrated with the liveliest gratitude, and with the most ardent love, let each christian exclaim, *Blessed be the God, and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten me again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, 1 Pet. i. 3. Let him join his voice to that of angels, and, in concert with the celestial intelligences, let him sing, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory*, Isa. vi. 3. Let *the tabernacles of the righteous* resound with the text, *the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly: the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly.*

But what melancholy thoughts are these, which interrupt the pleasures of this day? whose *tabernacles* are these? The tabernacles of *the righteous?* Ah! my brethren! wo be to you, if under pretence that *the righteous* ought to rejoice to day, you rejoice by adding sin to sin! The resurrection of the Saviour of the world perfectly assorts with the other parts of his œconomy. It is a spring flowing with motives to holiness. God has left nothing undone in the work of your salvation. The great work is finished. Jesus Christ completed it, when he rose from the tomb. The Son hath paid the ransom. The Father hath accepted it. The holy Spirit hath published it, and by innumerable prodigies hath confirmed it. None but yourselves can condemn you. Nothing can deprive you of this grace, but your own contempt of it.

But the more precious this grace is, the more criminal, and the more affronting to God, will your contempt of it be. The more joy, with which the glory of a risen Jesus ought to inspire you, if you believe in him, the more terror ought you to feel, if you attempt to disobey him. He, who *declared him the son of God, with power by the resurrection from the dead,* put *a sceptre of iron* into his hand, that he might *break* his enemies, and *dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel,* Rom. i. 4. Psal. ii. 9. Dost thou enter into these reflections? Dost thou approach the table of Jesus Christ with determinations to live a new life? I believe so. But the grand fault of our communions, and solemn festivals, doth not lie in the precise time of our communions and solemnities. The representation of Jesus Christ in the Lord's supper; certain reflections that move conscience; an extraordinary attention to the noblest object in religion; the solemnities that belong to our public festivals; inspire us with a kind of devotion: but how often does this devotion vanish with the objects that produced it? These august symbols should follow thee into thy warfare in the world. A voice should sound in thine ears amidst the tumult of the world; amidst the dissipating scenes that besiege thy mind; amidst the pleasures that fascinate thine eyes; amidst the grandeur and glory which thou causest to blaze around thee, and with which thou thyself, although, alas! always mortal, always a worm of the earth, always dust and ashes, art the first to be dazzled; a voice should sound in thine ears, Remember thy vows, remember thine oaths, remember thy joys.

My

My brethren, if you be not to-morrow, and till the next Lord's-supper-day, what you are to-day, we recal all the congratulations, all the benedictions, and all the declarations of joy, which we have addressed to you. Instead of congratulating you on your happiness in being permitted to approach God in your devotions, we will deplore your wickedness in adding perfidy and perjury to all your other crimes. Instead of benedictions and vows, we will cry, *Anathema, Maranatha; if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema*, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. If any man who hath kissed the Saviour betray him, *let him be Anathema.* If any man defile the mysteries of our holy religion, *let him be Anathema.* If any man *tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, let him be Anathema*, Heb. x. 29. Instead of inviting thee to celebrate the *praise* of the author of our being, we forbid thee the practice, for it *is comely* only *for the upright*, Psal. xxxiii. 1. *God*, by our ministry, *saith* to thee, Thou *wicked man! What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth?* Psal. l. 16. Why doth that mouth now bless my name, and then blaspheme it: now praise me thy Creator, and then defame my creatures: now publish my gospel, and then profane it?

If, on the contrary, you live agreeably to the engagements into which you have entered to-day; what a day, what a day, my brethren, is this day? A day in which you have performed the great work, for which God formed you, and which is all that deserves the attention of an immortal soul. A day in which many impurities, many calumnies, many passionate actions, many perjuries, and many oaths have been buried in everlasting silence. It is a day, in which you have been washed in the blood of the Lamb; in which you have entered into fellowship with God; in which you have heard these triumphant shouts in the church, *Grace, grace unto it*, Zech. iv. 7. A day in which you have been *raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, Eph. ii. 6. A day, the pleasing remembrance of which will follow you to your death-bed, and will enable your pastors to open the gates of heaven to you, to commit your souls into the hands of the Redeemer who ransomed it, and say to you, Remember, on such a day your sins were effaced; remember on such a day Jesus Christ disarmed death; remember, on such a day the gate of heaven was opened to you.

O day!

O day! which the Lord hath made, let me for ever rejoice in thy light! O day of designs, resolutions and promises, may I never forget thee! O day of consolation and grace, may a rich effusion of the peace of God on this auditory, preserve thy memorial through a thousand generations!

Receive this peace, my dear brethren. I spread over you hands washed in the innocent blood of my Redeemer; and as our risen Lord Jesus Christ, when he appeared to his disciples, said to them, *Peace, peace be unto you;* so we, by his command, while we celebrate the memorable history of his resurrection, say to you, *Peace, peace be unto you. As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God,* John xx. 19, 21. Gal. vi. 16. To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON IX.

THE EFFUSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

ACTS ii. 37.

Now when they heard this, *they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men* and *brethren, What shall we do?*

SON of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation. They will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: yet thou shalt *speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; and they shall know that there hath been a prophet among them,* Ezek. ii. 3. 5. and iii. 7. 11. Thus God formerly forearmed Ezekiel against the greatest discouragement, that he was to meet with in his mission, I mean the unsuccessfulness of his ministry. For, my brethren, they are not only your ministers, who are disappointed in the exercise of the ministry; Isaiahs, Jeremiahs, Ezekiels, are often as unsuccessful as we. In such melancholy cases we must endeavour to surmount the obstacles, which the obduracy of sinners opposeth against the dispensations of grace. We must shed tears of compassion over an ungrateful Jerusalem: and if, after we have used every possible mean, we find the corruption of our hearers invincible, we must be satisfied with the peace of a good conscience, we must learn to say with the prophet, or rather with Jesus Christ, *I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God,* Isa. xlix. 4. We must content ourselves with this thought, if our hearers have not been sanctified, they

have been left without excuse; if God have not been glorified in their conversion, he will be glorious in their destruction.

But how sad is this consolation! how melancholy is this encouragement! By consecrating our ministry to a particular society, we unite ourselves to the members of it by the tenderest ties, and, whatever idea we have of the happiness, which God reserveth for us in a future state, we know not how to persuade ourselves that we can be perfectly happy, when those christians, whom we consider as our brethren, and our children, are plunged in a gulph of everlasting woe. If *the angels of God rejoice over one sinner that repenteth*, Luke xv. 10. what pleasure must he feel, who hath reason to hope, that in this valley of tears he hath had the honour of opening the gate of heaven to a multitude of sinners, that he hath *saved himself and them that heard him*, 1 Tim. iv. 16.

This pure joy God gave on the day of pentecost to St. Peter. When he entered the ministerial course, he entered on a course of tribulations. When he was invested with the apostleship, he was invested with martyrdom. He, who said to him, *Feed my sheep, feed my lambs*, said also to him, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkest whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not*, John xxi. 15, 16, 18. In order to animate him against a world of contradicting opposers, and to sweeten the bitternesses, which were to accompany his preaching, Jesus Christ gave him the most delicious pleasure, that a christian preacher can taste. He caused, at the sound of his voice, those fortresses to fall, which were erected to oppose the establishment of the gospel. The first experiment of St. Peter is a miracle; his first sermon astonishes, alarms, transforms, and obtains three thousand conquests to Jesus Christ.

This marvellous event the primitive church saw, and this, while we celebrate, we wish to see again to day. Too long, alas! we have had no other encouragement in the exercise of our ministry than that, which God formerly gave to the prophet Ezekiel; shall we never enjoy that which he gave to St. Peter? Too long, alas! we have received that command from God, *Thou shalt speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord, whether they will*

will hear, or whether they will forbear, for they are a rebellious house. Almighty God! pour out that benediction on this sermon, which will excite compunction in the hearts, and put these words in the mouths of converts, *Men and brethren, what shall we do? Add* new members *to thy church,* Acts ii. 47. not only to the visible, but also to the invisible church, which is *thy peculiar treasure,* Exod. xix. 5. the object of thy tenderest love. Amen.

When they heard this they were pricked in their heart. They of whom the sacred historian speaks, were a part of those *Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Egypt,* ver. 9, 10. who had travelled to Jerusalem to keep the feast of pentecost. *When* these men *heard this,* that is, when they heard the sermon of St. Peter, *they were pricked in their heart, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?* In order to understand the happy effect, we must endeavour to understand the cause. In order to comprehend what passed in the auditory, we must understand the sermon of the preacher. There are five remarkable things in the sermon, and there are five correspondent dispositions in the hearers.

I. I see in the sermon a noble freedom of speech: and in the souls of the hearers those deep impressions, which a subject generally makes, when the preacher himself is deeply affected with its excellence, and emboldened by the justice of his cause.

II. There is in the sermon a miracle, which gives dignity and weight to the subject: and there is in the souls of the auditors that deference, which cannot be withheld from a man, to whose ministry God puts his seal.

III. I see in the sermon of the preacher an invincible power of reasoning; and in the souls of the audience that conviction, which carries along with it the consent of the will.

IV. There are in the sermon stinging reproofs; and in the souls of the hearers painful remorse, and regrets.

V. I observe in the sermon threatenings of approaching judgments; and in the souls of the hearers a horror that seizeth all their powers for fear of the judgments of a *consuming* God, Heb. xii. 29. These are five sources of reflections, my brethren; five comments on the words of the text.

I. We

I. We have remarked in the sermon of St. Peter that *noble freedom of speech*, which so well becomes a christian preacher, and is so well adapted to strike his hearers. How much soever we now admire this beautiful part of pulpit-eloquence, it is very difficult to imitate it. Sometimes a weakness of faith, which attends your best established preachers; sometimes worldly prudence; sometimes a timidity, that proceedeth from a modest consciousness of the insufficiency of their talents; sometimes a fear, too well grounded, alas! of the retorting of those censures, which people, always ready to murmur against them, who reprove their vices, are eager to make; sometimes a fear of those persecutions, which the world always raiseth against all, whom heaven qualifies to destroy the empire of sin; all these considerations damp the courage of the preacher, and deprive him of freedom of speech. If in the silent study, when the mind is filled with an apprehension of the tremendous majesty of God, we resolve to attack vice, how eminent soever the seat of its dominion may be, I own, my brethren, we are apt to be intimidated in a public assembly, when, in surveying the members, of whom it is composed, we see some hearers, whom a multitude of reasons ought to render very respectable to us.

But none of these considerations had any weight with our apostle. And, indeed, why should any of them affect him? Should the weakness of his faith; He had conversed with Jesus Christ himself; he had accompanied him on the holy mount, he had *heard a voice from the excellent glory*, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, 2 Pet. ii. 17. Moreover, he had seen him after his resurrection loaden with the spoils of death and hell, ascending to heaven in a cloud, received into the bosom of God amidst the acclamations of angels, shouting for joy, and crying, *Lift up your heads, O ye gates! ye everlasting doors! the king of glory shall come in*, Psal. xxiv. 7. Could he distrust his talents? The prince of the kingdom, *the author, and finisher of faith*, Heb. xii. 2. had told him, *Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church*, Matt. xvi. 18. Should he dread reproaches and recriminations? The purity of his intentions, and the sanctity of his life confound them. Should he pretend to keep fair with the world? But what finesse is to be used, when eternal misery is to be denounced, and eternal happiness proposed? Should he shrink back from the sufferings, that superstition

superstition and cruelty were preparing for christians? His timidity would have cost him too dear; it would have cost him sighs too deep, tears too many. Persecuting tyrants could invent no punishments so severe as those, which his own conscience had inflicted on him for his former fall: at all adventures, if he must be a martyr, he chooseth rather to die for religion than for apostacy.

Philosophers talk of certain invisible bands, that unite mankind to one another. A man, animated with any passion, hath in the features of his face, and in the tone of his voice, a something, that partly communicates his sentiments to his hearers. Error proposed in a lively manner by a man, who is affected with it himself, may seduce unguarded people. Fictions, which we know, are fictions, exhibited in this manner, move and affect us for a moment. But what a dominion over the heart doth that speaker obtain, who delivers truths, and who is affected himself with the truths which he delivereth? To this part of the eloquence of St. Peter, we must attribute the emotions of his hearers; *they were pricked in their heart.* They said to the apostles, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Such are the impressions, which a man, deeply affected with the excellence of his subject, and emboldened by the justice of his cause, makes on his hearers.

II. A second thing, which gave weight and dignity to the sermon of St. Peter, was *the miracle*, that preceded his preaching, I mean the gift of tongues, which had been communicated to all the apostles. This prodigy had three characteristic marks of a genuine miracle. What is a true, genuine, authentic miracle? In my opinion, one of the principal causes of the fruitlessness of all our inquiries on this article is the pretending to examine it philosophically. This rock we should cautiously endeavour to avoid. Mankind know so little of the powers of nature, that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine strictly and philosophically, whether an action, which seems to us a real miracle, be really such; or whether it be not our ignorance that causeth it to appear so to us. We are so unacquainted with the faculties of unembodied spirits, and of others, which are united to some portion of matter by laws different from those, that unite our bodies and souls, that we cannot determine whether an event, which seems to us an immediate work

work of the omnipotence of God, be not operated by an inferior power, though subordinate to his will.

But the more reason a philosopher hath for mortification, when he pretends thoroughly to elucidate abstruse questions, in order to gratify curiosity, the more helps hath a christian to satisfy himself, when he investigates them with the laudable design of knowing all that is necessary to be known, in order to salvation. Let us abridge the matter. The prodigy, that accompanied the sermon of St. Peter, had three characteristic marks of a real miracle:

1. *It was above human power.* Every pretended miracle, that hath not this first character, ought to be suspected by us. The want of this hath prevented our astonishment at several prodigies, that have been played off against the reformation, and will always prevent their making any impression on our minds. No; should a hundred statues of the blessed virgin move before us; should the images of all the saints walk; should a thousand phantoms appear*; should voices in the air be heard against Calvin and Luther; we should infer only one conclusion from all these artifices, that is, that they, who use them, distrusting the justice of their cause, supply the want of truth with trick, that, as they despair of obtaining rational converts, they may, at least, proselyte simple souls.

But the prodigy in question was evidently superior to human power. Of all sciences in the world, that of language is the least capable of an instant acquisition. Certain natural talents, a certain superiority of genius, sometimes produce in some men the same effects, which long and painful industry can scarcely ever produce in others. We have sometimes seen people, whom nature seems to have designedly formed in an instant, become courageous captains, profound geometers, admirable orators: But tongues are acquired by study and time. The acquisition of languages is like the knowledge of history. It is not a superior genius, it is not a great capacity, that can discover to any man what passed in the world ten or twelve ages ago. The monuments of antiquity must be consulted, huge folios must be read, and an immense number of volumes must be understood, arranged, and digested. In like manner, the knowledge of languages is a knowledge of experience, and no man can ever derive it from his

* See a great number of examples of this kind in Lavater's *Trait des Spectres.*

his own innate fund of ability. Yet the apostles, and apostolical men, who were known to be men of no education, all on a sudden knew the arbitrary signs, by which different nations had agreed to express their thoughts. Terms, which had no natural connection with their ideas, were all on a sudden arranged in their minds. Those things, which other men can only acquire by disgustful labour, those particularly, which belong to the most difficult branches of knowledge, they understood without making the least attempt to learn them. They even offered to communicate those gifts to them, who believed their doctrine, and thereby prevented the suspicions, that might have been formed of them, of having affected ignorance all their lives, in order to astonish all the world at last with a display of literature, and by that to cover the black design of imposing on the church.

2. But perhaps these miracles may not be the more respectable on account of their superiority to human power. Perhaps, if they be not human, they may be devilish? No, my brethren, a little attention to their second character will convince you that they are divine. *Their end was to incline men, not to renounce natural and revealed religion, but to respect and to follow both: not to render an attentive examination unnecessary, but to allure men to it.*

It is impossible that God should divide an intelligent soul between evidence and evidence; between the evidence of falshood in an absurd proposition, and the evidence of truth that results from a miracle wrought in favour of that proposition. I have evident proofs in favour of this proposition, *The whole is greater than a part*. Were God to work a miracle in favour of the opposite proposition, *The whole is less than a part;* he would divide my mind between evidence and evidence, between the evidence of my proposition, and the evidence that resulted from the miracle wrought in favour of the opposite proposition: he would require me to believe a truth, that could not be established without the renouncing of another truth.

In like manner, were God to work a miracle to authorize a doctrine, opposite to any one of those, which are demonstrated by natural or revealed religion; God would be contrary to himself: he would establish that by natural and revealed religion, which he would destroy by a miracle, and he would establish by a miracle, what he would destroy by natural and revealed religion.

The end of the prodigy of the preaching of St. Peter, the end of all the miracles of the apostles, was to render men attentive to natural and revealed religion. When they addressed themselves to Pagans, you know, they exhorted them to avail themselves of the light of nature in order to understand their need of revelation: and in this chapter the apostle exhorts the Jews to compare the miracle, that was just now wrought, with their own prophecies, that from both there might arise proof of the divine mission of that Messiah, whom he preached to them.

3. The prodigy, that accompanied the preaching of St. Peter, had the third character of a true miracle. *It was wrought in the presence of those, who had the greatest interest in knowing the truth of it.* Without this, how could this miracle have inclined them to embrace the religion in favour of which it was wrought? On this article there hath been, and there will be, an eternal dispute between us and the members of that communion, with which it is far more desirable for us to have an unity of faith than an open war. It is a maxim which the church of Rome hath constituted an article of faith; that the presence of an heretic suspends a miracle. How unjust is this maxim!

We dispute with you the essential characters of the true church. You pretend that one indelible character is the power of working miracles: and, you add, this power resides with you in all its glory. We require you to produce evidence. We promise to be open to conviction. We engage to allow the argument, which you derive from the power of working miracles, all the weight that religion will suffer us to give it. But you keep out of sight. You chuse for your theatres, cloisters and monasteries, and your own partisans and disciples are your only spectators.

The apostles observed a different conduct. Very far from adopting your maxim; that the presence of a heretic suspends a miracle, they affirmed the direct contrary. St Paul expressly saith, *Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not,* 1 Cor. xiv. 22. This is a very remarkable passage. Some of the primitive christians made an indiscreet parade of their miraculous gifts in religious assemblies. St. Paul reproves their vanity: but at the same time tells the Corinthians, that in some cases they might produce those gifts in their assemblies, they might exercise them when *unbelievers* were present; that is, when persons

persons were in their assemblies, who were not convinced of the truth of the gospel.

Read the history of the apostles. Where did Philip the evangelist heal a great number of demoniacs? Was this miracle performed in the cell of a monastery? In the presence of partial and interested persons? No: it was in Samaria; in the presence of that celebrated magician, who, not being able to deny, or to discredit the miracles of the apostle, offered to purchace the power of working them, Acts viii. 7, 9, 18, &c. Where did the holy Spirit descend on Cornelius the centurion, and on all those who were with him? chap. x. In a dark chamber of a convent? Not in the presence of suspected persons? Behold! it was in Cesarea, a city full of Jews, a city in which the Roman governors held their courts, and where a considerable garrison of Roman soldiers was always stationed. In what place was the imagination of the populace so stricken with the miracles that were wrought by St. Paul in the course of two years, that they carried *unto the sick handkerchiefs and aprons*, at the touching of which *diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them?* Acts xix. 12. Was it in a nunnery? Was it not in the presence of suspected persons? Behold! it was at Ephesus, another metropolis, where a great number of Jews resided, and where they had a famous synagogue. And not to wander any further from my principal subject, where did the apostles exercise those gifts which they had received from the Holy Ghost? In a conclave? No. In the presence of suspected persons? Yea: in the presence of *Medes, Parthians, and Elamites, before dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Pontus, in Asia, in Phrygia, and in Egypt, in Pamphylia, in Lybia, and in Rome.* They exercised their gifts in Jerusalem itself, in the very city where Jesus Christ had been crucified. The prodigy that accompanied the preaching of St. Peter, had all the characters then, of a true, real, genuine miracle.

The miracle being granted, I affirm, that *the compunction of heart*, of which my text speaks, was an effect of that attention, which could not be refused to such an extraordinary event, and of *that deference, which could not be withheld from a man, to whose ministry God had set his seal.* Such prodigies might well give dignity and weight to the language of those, who wrought them, and prepare the minds of spectators to attend to the evidence of their argumentation. Modern preachers, sometimes borrow the innocent artifices of

eloquence to engage you to hear those truths, which you ought to hear for their own sakes. They endeavour sometimes to obtain, by a choice of words, a tour of thought, an harmonious cadence, that attention, which you would often withhold from their subjects, were they content with proposing them in a manner simple and unadorned. But how great were the advantages of the first heralds of the gospel over modern preachers! The resurrection of a dead body; what a fine exordium! the sudden death of an Ananias, and a Sapphira; what an alarming conclusion! The expressive eloquence of a familiar supernatural knowledge of the least known, and the best sounding tongues; how irresistibly striking! Accordingly, three thousand of the hearers of St. Peter, yielded to the power of his speech. They instantly, and entirely, surrendered themselves to men, who addressed them in a manner so extraordinary, *they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, men, and brethren what shall we do?*

III. We remark, in the discourse of the apostle, *an invincible power of reasoning*, and, in the souls of his hearers, *that conviction which carries along with it the consent of the will.* Of all methods of reasoning with an adversary, none is more close and conclusive than that which is taken from his own principles. It hath this advantage above others, the opponent is obliged, according to strict rules of reasoning, to admit the argument, although it be sophistical and false. For by what rule can he reject my proposition, if it have an equal degree of probability with another proposition, which he receives as evident, and demonstrative? But when the principles of an adversary are well grounded; and when we are able to prove that his principles produce our conclusions, our reasoning becomes demonstrative to a rational opponent, and he cannot deny it.

Christianity, it is remarkable, is defensible both ways. The first may be successfully employed against Pagans; the second more successfully against the Jews. It is easy to convince a heathen, that he can have no right to exclaim against the mysteries of the gospel; because if we have any reason to exclaim against the mysteries of christianity, he hath infinitely more to exclaim against those of paganism. *Doth it become you,* said Justin Martyr to the heathens in his second apology for christianity, *Doth it become you to disallow our mysteries; that the word was the only begot-*

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ten Son of God, that he was crucified, that he rose from the dead, that he ascended to heaven? We affirm nothing but what hath been taught and believed by you. For the authors, ye know, whom ye admire, say that Jupiter had many children; that Mercury is the word, the interpreter, the teacher of all; that Esculapius, after he had been stricken with thunder, ascended to heaven, and so on.*

The second way was employed more successfully by the apostles against the Jews. They demonstrated, that all the reasons, which obliged them to be Jews, ought to have induced them to become christians; that every argument, which obliged them to acknowledge the divine legation of Moses, ought to have engaged them to believe in Jesus Christ. St. Peter made use of this method. All the apostles used it. Put together all those valuable fragments of their sermons, which the holy Spirit hath preserved, and you will easily see, that these holy men took the Jews on their own principles, and endeavoured to convince them, as we just now said, that whatever engaged them to adhere to Judaism ought to have engaged them to embrace christianity, that what induced them to be Jews ought to have induced them to become christians.

What argument can you allege for your religion, said they to the Jews, which doth not establish that which we preach? Do you allege the privileges of your legislator? Your argument is demonstrative: Moses had access to God on the holy mountain; he did converse with him as a man speaketh to his friend. But this argument concludes for us. The christian legislator had more glorious privileges still. *God raised him up, having loosed the pains of death,* Acts ii. 24, &c. he suffered not his holy one to see corruption, he hath caused him *to sit on his throne, he hath made him both Lord and Christ.*

Do you allege the purity of the morality of your religion? Your argument is demonstrative. The manifest design of your religion is to reclaim men to God, to prevent idolatry, and to inspire them with piety, benevolence, and zeal. But this argument concludes for us. What do we preach to you but these very articles? To what would we engage you, except to *repent* of your sins, to receive *the promise* which was

* Justin. Martyr. Apol. 2. pro christian. Page 66, 67. Edit. D...

was made *unto you, and to your children*, and *to save yourselves from this untoward generation?* verse 39. Do we require any thing of you beside that spirit of benevolence, which unites the hearts of mankind, and which makes us *have all things common, sell our possessions, part them to all men, as every man hath need, and continue daily in the temple with one accord*, ver. 44, &c.

Do you allege the miracles, that were wrought to prove the truth of your religion? Your argument is demonstrative. But this argument establisheth the truth of our religion. Behold the miraculous gifts, which have been already communicated to those, who have believed; and which are ready to be communicated to those, who shall yet believe. Behold each of us working miracles, which have never been wrought by any, except by a few of the divine men, who are so justly venerable in your esteem. See, the holy Ghost is *poured out upon all flesh; our sons, and our daughters prophesy, our young men see visions, and our old men dream dreams, our servants and our handmaids* are honoured with miraculous gifts, verse 17.

What then, are the prejudices that still engage you to continue in the profession of Judaism? Are they derived from the prophecies? Your principles are demonstrative: but, in the person of our Jesus, we shew you to-day all the grand characters, which, your own prophets said, would be found in the Messiah. In the person of our Jesus is accomplished that famous prophecy in the sixteenth Psalm, which some of you apply to David, and to support a misrepresentation, propagate a ridiculous tradition that he never died, although his tomb is among you: *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption*, ver. 10. In the person of our Jesus is accomplished the celebrated prediction of the psalmist, *Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*, Psal. cx. 1. Such were the arguments of St. Peter.

Close reasoning ought to be the soul of all discourses. I compare it in regard to eloquence with benevolence in regard to religion. Without benevolence we may maintain a shew of religion: but we cannot possess the substance of it. *Speak with the tongues of angels, have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, have all faith, so that ye could remove mountains, bestow all your goods to feed the poor, and give your bodies to be burned*, if you have not benevolence, you are *nothing*, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, &c. If you

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be destitute of benevolence, all your virtue is nothing but a noise, it is only as *sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal.* In like manner in regard to eloquence; speak with authority, display treasures of erudition, let the liveliest and most sublime imagination wing it away, turn all your periods till they make music in the most delicate ear, what will all your discourses be, if void of argumentation? a noise, *sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal.* You may surprize; but you cannot convince: you may dazzle; but you cannot instruct: you may, indeed, please; but you cannot either change, sanctify, nor transform.

IV. There are, in the sermon of St. Peter, *stinging reproofs*; and, in the souls of the hearers, *a pungent remorse.* The apostle reproveth the Jews in these words, *Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain,* ver. 22. This single reproof excited the most shocking ideas, that can alarm the mind. And who can express the agitations, which were produced in the souls of the audience? What pencil can describe the state of their consciences? They had committed this crime *through ignorance*, Acts iii. 17. They had congratulated one another on having destroyed the chief enemy of their religion, and on having freed the church from a monster, who had risen up to devour it. They had lifted up their bloody hands toward heaven, and, to the rewarder of virtue, had prayed for a recompence for parricide. They had insolently displayed the spoils of Jesus, as trophies after a victory are displayed. The same principle, which excited them to commit the crime, prevented their discovery of its enormity, after they had committed it. The same vails, which they had thrown over the glorious virtue of Jesus Christ, during his humiliation, they still continued to throw over it, in his exaltation. St. Peter tore these fatal vails asunder. He shewed these madmen their own conduct in its true point of light; and discovered their parricide in all its horror: *Ye have taken, and crucified Jesus, who was approved of God.* Methinks, I see the history; or shall I say the fable? of a Theban king acting over again. Educated far from the place of his nativity he knew not his parents. His magnanimity seemed to indicate, if not the grandeur of his birth, at least the lustre

lustre of his future life. The quelling of the most outrageous disturbers of society, and the destroying of monsters, were his favourite employments. Nothing seemed impossible to his courage. In one of his expeditions, without knowing him, he killed his father. Some time after, he encountered a monster, that terrified the whole kingdom, and for his reward obtained his own mother in marriage. At length he found out the fatal mystery of his origin, and the tragical murder of his own father. Shocked at his wretchedness; it is not right, exclaimed he, that the perpetrator of such crimes should enjoy his sight; and he tore out his own eyes.

This image is too faint to express the agonies of the Jews. The ignorance of Oedipus was invincible: that of the Jews was voluntary. St. Peter dissipated this ignorance. *Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified, and slain.* This charge excited ideas of a thousand distressing truths. The apostle reminded them of the holy rules of righteousness, which Jesus Christ had preached, and exemplified; and the holiness of him, whom they had crucified, filled them with a sense of their own depravity.

He reminded them of the benefits, which Jesus Christ had bountifully bestowed on their nation; of the preference, which he had given them above all other people in the world; and of the exercise of his ministry among *the lost sheep of the house of Israel*, Matt. xv. 24. and his profusion of these blessings discovered their black ingratitude.

He reminded them of the grandeur of Jesus Christ. He shewed them, that the Jesus, who had appeared so very contemptible to them, *upheld all things by the word of his power;* that *the angels of God worshipped him;* that *God had given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow*, Heb. i. 3, 6. Phil. ii. 9, 10.

He reminded them of their unworthy treatment of Jesus Christ; of their eager outcries for his death; of their repeated shoutings, *Away with him, away with him, crucify him, crucify him*, Luke xxii. 18, 21. of their barbarous insults, *He saved others, let him save himself*, ver. 35. of the crown of thorns, the scarlet robe, the ridiculous sceptre, and all other cruel circumstances of his sufferings and death; and the whole taught them the guilt of their parricide. The whole

whole was an ocean of terror, and each reflection a wave, that overwhelmed, distorted, and distressed their souls.

V. In fine, we may remark in the sermon of St. Peter *denunciations of divine vengeance.* The most effectual mean for the conversion of sinners, that, which St. Paul so successfully employed, is *terror*, 2 Cor. v. 11. St. Peter was too well acquainted with the obduracy of his auditors not to avail himself of this motive. People, who had imbrued their hands in the blood of a personage so august, wanted this mean. In order to attack them with any probability of success, it was necessary to shoot *the arrows of the Almighty* at them, and to *set the terrors of God in array against them*, Job. vi. 4. St. Peter described to these murderers *that great and notable day of the Lord*, ver. 21. so famous among their prophets, *that day*, in which God would avenge the death of his Son, punish the greatest of all crimes with the greatest of all miseries, and execute that sentence, which the Jews had denounced on themselves, *His blood be on us, and our children*, Matt. xxvii. 25.

St. Peter quoted a prophecy of Joel, which foretold *that fatal day*, and the prophecy was the more terrible, because one part of it was accomplished; because the remarkable events, that were to precede it, were actually come to pass; for the Spirit of God had begun to *pour out* his miraculous influences *upon all flesh, young men had seen visions, and old men had dreamed dreams*; and the formidable preparations of approaching judgments were then before their eyes. Herod the Great had already put those to a cruel death, who had raised a sedition on account of his placing the Roman eagle on the gate of the temple. Already Pilate had set up the Roman standard in Jerusalem, had threatened all, who opposed it, with death, and had made a dreadful havoc among them, who refused to agree to his making an aqueduct in that city. Twenty thousand Jews had been already massacred in Cesarea, thirteen thousand in Scythopolis, and fifty thousand in Alexandria. Cestius Gallus had already overwhelmed Judea with a formidable army*. Terrible harbingers of *that great and notable day of the Lord!* Just grounds of fear and terror! The auditors of St. Peter, on hearing these predictions, and on perceiving their fulfilment,

* Joseph. Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 6. p. 766. Oxon. 1720. Ibid. lib. xviii. p. 797. De bell. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 18. p. 1095.

were pricked in their heart, and said to all the members of the apstolical college, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

Such was the power of the sermon of St. Peter over the souls of his hearers! Human eloquence hath sometimes done wonders worthy of immortal memory. Some of the ancient orators have governed the souls of the most invincible heroes, and the life of Cicero affords us an example. Ligarius had the audacity to make war on Cæsar. Cæsar was determined to make the rash adventurer a victim to his revenge. The friends of Ligarius durst not interpose, and Ligarius was on the point, either of being justly punished for his offence, or of being sacrificed to the unjust ambition of his enemy. What force could controul the power of Cæsar? But Cæsar had an adversary, whose power was superior to his own. This adversary pleads for Ligarius against Cæsar, and Cæsar, all invincible as he is, yields to the eloquence of Cicero. Cicero pleads, Cæsar feels; in spite of himself, his wrath subsides, his hatred diminishes, his vengeance disappears. The fatal list of the crimes of Ligarius, which he is about to produce to the judges, falls from his hands, and, he actually absolves him at the close of the oration, whom, when he entered the court, he meant to condemn. But yield, ye orators of Athens and Rome! Yield to our fishermen and tent makers. O how powerful is the sword of the Spirit in the hands of our apostles! See the executioners of Jesus Christ, yet foaming with rage and madness against him. See! they are as ready to shed the blood of the disciples, as they were to murder their master. But the voice of St. Peter quells all their rage, turns the current of it, and causes those to bow to the yoke of Jesus Christ, who had just before put him to death.

Allow, my brethren, that you cannot recollect the sermon of St. Peter without envying those happy primitive christians, who enjoyed the precious advantage of hearing such a preacher; or without saying to yourselves, such exhortations would have found the way to our hearts, they would have aroused us from our security, touched our consciences, and produced effects, which the modern way of preaching is incapable of producing.

But, my brethren, will you permit us to ask you one question? Would you choose to hear the apostles, and ministers like the apostles? Would you attend their sermons? or, to say all in one word, Do you wish St. Peter was now in this

this pulpit? Think a little, before you answer this question. Compare the taste of this auditory with the genius of the preacher; your delicacy with that liberty of speech, with which he reproved the vices of his own times. For our parts, we, who think we know you, we are persuaded, that no preacher would be less agreeable to you than St. Peter. Of all the sermons, that could be addressed to you, there could be none, that would be received less favourably than those, which should be composed on the plan of that, which this apostle preached at Jerusalem.

One wants to find something new in every sermon; and, under pretence of satisfying this laudable desire of improvement in knowledge, would divert our attention from well known vices, that deserve to be censured. Another desires to be pleased, and would have us adorn our discourses, not that we may obtain an easier access to his heart; not that we may, by the innocent artifice of availing ourselves of his love of pleasure, oppose the love of pleasure itself: but that we may flatter a kind of concupisence, which is content to sport with a religious exercise, till, when divine service ends, it can plunge into more sensual joy. Almost all require to be lulled asleep in sin; and although nobody is so gross as to say, flatter my wicked inclinations, stupify my conscience, praise my crimes, yet almost every body *loves to have it so*, Jer. v. 31. A principle of, I know not what, refined security, makes us desire to be censured to a certain degree, so that the slight emotions, which we receive, may serve for a presumption that we repent, and may produce an assurance, which we could not enjoy under an apology for our sins. We consent to the touching of the wound: but we refuse to suffer any one to probe it. Lenitives may be applied: but the fire and the knife must not go to the bottom of the putrefaction to make a sound cure.

Ah! how disagreeable to you would the sermons of the apostles have been! Realize them. Imagine one of those venerable men, ascending this pulpit, after he had been in the public places of your resort, after he had been familiarly acquainted with your domestic œconomy, after he had seen through the flimsy vails, that cover some criminal intrigues, after he had been informed of certain secrets, which I dare not even hint, and of some bare-faced crimes, that are committed in the sight of the sun: Would the venerable man, think you, gratify your taste for preaching? Would he submit to the laws, that your profound wisdom tyrannically

imposeth on your preachers? Would he gratify your curiosity, think you, with nice discussions? Do you believe, he would spend all his time and pains in conjuring you not to despair? Would he content himself, think you, with coolly informing you, in a vague and superficial manner, that you *must be virtuous?* Would he finish his sermon with a pathetic exhortation to you not to entertain the least doubt about your salvation?

Ah! my brethren, methinks, I hear the holy man; methinks, I hear the preacher, animated with the same spirit, that made him boldly tell the murderers of Jesus Christ; *Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders, and signs, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.* Methinks, I see St. Peter, the man who was so extremely affected with the sinful state of his auditors; the preacher, who exhibited the objects, that he exposed in his sermon, in that point of view, which was most likely to discover to his auditors the enormity of their actions: methinks, I see him tearing the miserable vails, with which men conceal the turpitude of their crimes, after they have committed them. Methinks, I hear him enumerating the various excesses of this station, and saying! You! you are void of all sensibility, when we tell you of the miseries of the church, when we describe those bloody scenes, that are made up of dungeons and gallies, apostates and martyrs. You! you have silently stood by, and suffered religion to be attacked; and have favoured the publication of those execrable books, which plead for a system of impiety and atheism, and which are professedly written to render virtue contemptible, and the perfections of God doubtful. You! you have spent twenty, thirty, forty years in a criminal neglect of religion, without once examining whether the doctrines of God, of heaven, and of hell, be fables or facts. Methinks, I hear him exhort each of you to *save himself from this untoward generation*, Acts ii. 40.

Let us throw ourselves at the feet of the apostle, or, rather, let us prostrate ourselves at the foot of the throne of that Jesus, whom we have insulted, and who, in spite of all the insults, that we have offered him, still calleth, and still inviteth us to repent. Let each of us say to him, as the convinced Saul Said to him on the road to Damascus, *Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?* chap. ix. 6. O! may emotions of heart as rapid as words, and holy actions as rapid as

emotions

emotions of heart, may all we are, and all we have, may all form one grand flow of repentance; and may *the day of salvation, the day of the gladness of the heart,* succeed *that great and notable day of the Lord,* Isa. lxix. 8. Cant. iii. 2. the distant prospect of which terrifieth us, and the coming of which will involve the impenitent in hopeless destruction. May God himself form these dispositions within us! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON X.

THE SUFFICIENCY OF REVELATION.

LUKE, xvi. 27, 28, 29, 30, 31.

The rich man *said, I pray thee,* father Abraham! *that thou wouldest send* Lazarus *to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

LET no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. Thus speaks St. James in the first chapter of his general epistle, ver. 13. The apostle proposeth in general to humble his readers under a sense of their sins, and in particular to oppose that monstrous error, which taxeth God with injustice by making him the author of sin. This seems at first view quite needless, at least in regard to us. God the author of sin! Odious supposition! So contrary to our surest ideas of the supreme Being, so opposite to his law, so incompatible with the purity of those *eyes which cannot look on iniquity*, Hab. i. 13. that it seems impossible it should enter the mind of man, or if there were any in the time of St. James who entertained such an opinion, they must have been monsters, who were stifled in their birth, and who have no followers in these latter ages.

Alas! my brethren, let us learn to know ourselves. Although this notion seems repugnant to our reason at first, yet

yet it is but too true, we secretly adopt it; we revolve it in our minds; and we even avail ourselves of it to excuse our corruption and ignorance. As the study of truth requires leisure and labour, man, naturally indolent in matters of religion, usually avoids both, and being at the same time inclined to evade a charge of guilt, and to justify his conduct, seeks the cause of his disorder in heaven, taxeth God himself, and accuseth him of having thrown such an impenetrable veil over truth, that it cannot be discovered; and of having placed virtue on the top of an eminence, so lofty and so craggy, that it cannot be attained. It is therefore necessary to oppose that doctrine against modern infidels, which the apostles opposed against ancient heretics, to publish and to establish, in our auditories the maxim of St. James, *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.*

To this important end we intend to direct our meditations to day, and to this the Saviour of the world directed the parable, the conclusion of which we have just now read to you. Our Saviour describes a man in misery, who by soliciting Abraham to employ a new mean for the conversion of his brethren, tacitly exculpates himself, and seems to tax providence with having formerly used only imperfect and improper means for his conversion. Abraham reprimands his audacity, and attests the sufficiency of the ordinary means of grace. Thus speaks our evangelist; *The rich man said, I pray thee, father Abraham, that thou wouldst send Lazarus to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

Before we enter into a particular discussion of the subject, we will make two general observations, which are the ground of the whole discourse. The passage we have read to you seems at first an unnatural association of heterogeneous ideas: a disembodied wicked man in *flames!* ver. 24. a conversation between a miserable man in hell, and Abraham amidst angels in glory! compassion in a damned soul, revolving in the horrors of hell! The combination of these ideas

ideas doth not appear natural, and therefore they necessarily put us on enquiring, Is this a bare history? Is it the relation of an event that actually came to pass; but coloured with borrowed imagery, which Jesus Christ, according to his usual custom, employed to convey to his hearers some important truth?

We shall enter no further at present into a discussion of these articles than the subject before us requires. Whether the Lord narrate a real history, as some pretend, because Lazarus is named, and because a circumstantial detail agrees better with real facts than with fiction: or whether the whole be a parable, which seems not unlikely, especially if, as some critics affirm*, some ancient manuscripts introduce the passage with these words, JESUS SPAKE A PARABLE, SAYING, *There was a certain rich man*, and so on: or whether, as in many other cases, it be a mixture of real history, coloured with parabolical simile: which of these opinions soever we embrace, (and, by the way, it is not of any great consequence to determine which is the true one,) our text, it is certain, cannot be taken in a strict literal sense. It cannot be said, either that the rich man in hell conversed with Abraham in heaven, or that he discovered any tenderness for his brethren. No, there is no communication, by brethren, between glorified saints and the prisoners whom the vengeance of God confineth in hell. The *great gulph*, that *is fixed between* them, prevents their approach to one another, and deprives them of all converse together. Moreover, death, which separateth us from all the living, and teareth us away from all the objects of our passions, effaceth them from our memories, and detacheth them from our hearts. And although the benevolence of the glorified saints may incline them to interest themselves in the state of the militant church, yet the horrible torments of the damned exclude all concern from their minds, except that of their own tormenting horrors.

Our next observation is on the answer of Abraham; *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.* What a paradox! Who would not be affected and converted, on seeing one return from the other world to attest the truth of the gospel? Could the tyrants of our days see the places where Nero, Dioclesian, and Decius, expiate their cruelties to the

* See Dr. Mill's Greek testament.

primitive christians, would they persist in their barbarities? Were that proud son, who wastes in so much luxury the wealth that his father accumulated by his extortions, to behold his parent in devouring fire, would he dare to abandon himself to his stupid pleasures, and to retain a patrimony, which was acquired with a curse? This difficulty is the more considerable, because Jesus Christ speaks to Jews. The Jews were less acquainted with the state of souls after death than christians are. It should seem, the rising of a person from the dead, by increasing their knowledge on that article, would have been a much stronger motive to piety than all their ordinary means of revelation.

My brethren, this is one of those undeniable truths, which although some particular exception may be made to them, are yet strictly verified in the ordinary course of things. The precise meaning of our Saviour, if I mistake not, may be included in two propositions, of which the one regards infidels, and the other libertines.

First, The revelation that God addresseth to us, hath evidence of its truth sufficient to convince every reasonable creature, who will take the pains to examine it.

Secondly, God hath founded the gospel exhortations to virtue on motives, the most proper to procure obedience.

From these two propositions it follows, that men have no right to require either a clearer revelation, or stronger motives to obey it: and that, were God to indulge the unjust pretensions of sinners; were he even to condescend to send persons from the dead to attest the truth of the gospel, and to address us by new motives, it is probable, not to say certain, that the new prodigy would neither effect the conviction of unbelievers, nor the conversion of libertines. My text is an apology for religion, and such I intend this sermon to be. An apology for christianity, against the difficulties of infidels; and an apology for christianity against the subterfuges of libertines. Let us endeavour to convince both, that he who resisteth Moses and the prophets, or rather Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the gospel, (for we preach to a christian auditory,) would not yield to any evidence that might arise from the testimony of a person raised from the dead. If the obscurity of revelation under the Mosaical œconomy seem to render the proposition in the text less evident in regard to the Jews, we will endeavour to remove this difficulty at the close of this discourse.

I. We

I. We begin with unbelievers, and we reduce them to five classes. The first consists of stupid infidels; the next of negligent infidels; the third of witty infidels; the fourth is made up of those who are interested in infidelity; and the last we call philosophical infidels. We affirm that the proposition of Jesus Christ in the text, that is, that it would not be just, that in general it would be useless to evoke the dead to attest the truth of revelation, is true in regard to these five classes of unbelievers.

1. We place *the stupid infidel* in the first rank. By a stupid infidel we mean a person whose genius is so small, that he is incapable of entering into the easiest arguments, and of comprehending the plainest discussions; whose dark and disordered mind perplexeth and enslaveth reason; and whom God seems to have placed in society chiefly for the sake of rendering the capacities of others more conspicuous. Unbelievers of this kind attend to the mysteries of christianity with an incapacity equal to that, which they discover in the ordinary affairs of life, and they refuse to believe, because they are incapable of perceiving motives of credibility. Have these people, you will ask, no right to require a revelation more proportional to their capacities: and may God, agreeably to exact rules of justice and goodness, refer them to the present revelation? To this we have two things to answer.

First, There would be some ground for this pretence, were God to exact of dull capacities a faith as great as that, which he requireth of great, lively, and capable minds. But the scriptures attest a truth, that perfectly agrees with the perfections of God; that is, that *the number of talents*, which God giveth to mankind, *will regulate the account*, which he will require of them, in that great day, when he will come to judge the world. *As many as have sinned without law*, Rom. ii. 12. (remember these maxims, you faint and trembling consciences; you whose minds are fruitful in doubts and fears, and who, after you have made a thousand laborious researches, tremble lest you should have taken the semblance of truth for truth itself.) *As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law;* that is to say, without being judged by any law, which they have not received, *That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with more stripes, than he who knew it not. It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than*

for the cities in which Jesus Christ himself preached his gospel, Luke xii. 47. Matt. xi. 22. If it were granted, then, that such a prodigy as the appearance of one risen from the dead would strike a stupid infidel, God is not obliged to raise one; because he will regulate his judgment, not only by the nature of that revelation which was addressed to him, but also by that portion of capacity, which was given him to comprehend it. I would impress this observation on those savage souls, who act as if they were commissioned to dispense the treasures of divine justice, and who are as liberal of the judgments of God, as he is of his eternal mercy. No, my brethren, these are not *the saints* who *shall judge the world,* 1 Cor. vi. 2. These are the *wicked and slothful servants,* who accuse their master of *reaping where he hath not sown,* Matt. xxv. 24. The blessed God, who is less inclined to punish than to pardon, will never impute to his creatures the errors of an invincible ignorance. Without this consideration, I own, although I am confirmed in believing my religion by the clearest evidence, yet my conscience would be racked with continual fears, and the innumerable experiences I have had of the imperfection of my knowledge would fill me with horror and terror, even while in the sincerest manner I should apply my utmost attention to my salvation.

We affirm in the second place, that *the fundamental truths of religion lie within the reach of people of the meanest capacities, if they will take the pains to examine them.* This is one of the bases of our reformation. Happy protestants! (by the way) were you always to act consistently with your principles, if, either by an obstinate heresy, or by an orthodoxy to scholastic, you were not almost always falling into one of these two extremes, either in that of renouncing christianity, by explaining away its fundamental truths; or if I may venture to speak so, into that of sinking it by overloading it with the embarassing disputes of the schools.

We say, then, that the fundamental points of christianity lie within the reach of the narrowest capacities. The christian religion teacheth us, that God created the world. Doth not this truth, which philosophy hath established on so many abstract and metaphysical proofs, demonstrate itself to our minds, to our eyes, and to all our senses? Do not the innumerable objects of sense, which surround us, most emphatically announce the existence and the glory of the Creator?

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The christian religion commandeth us to live holily. Doth not this truth also demonstrate itself? Is not the voice of conscience in concert with that of religion; doth it not give evidence in favour of the laws, which religion prescribes? The christian religion teacheth us, that Jesus Christ came into the world, that he lived among men, that he died, that he rose again, that he gave the holy Spirit to the first heralds of the gospel; these are facts, and we maintain that these facts are supported by proofs so clear, and so easy, that men must be entirely destitute of every degree of impartial reason not to perceive their evidence.

Further. Take the controversies that now subsist among christians, and it will appear that a man of a very moderate degree of sense may distinguish truth from error on these articles. For, my brethren, we ought not to be intimidated either at the authority, or at the characters of those, who start difficulties. The greatest geniusses have often maintained the greatest absurdities. It hath been affirmed that there is no motion in nature. Some philosophers, and philosophers of fame, have ventured to maintain that there is no matter, and others have doubted of their own existence. If you determine to admit no propositions, that have been denied, or disputed, you will never admit any. Consider modern controversies with a cool impartiality; and you will acknowledge, than an ordinary capacity may discern the true from the false in the contested points. A man of an ordinary capacity may easily perceive, in reading the holy scriptures, that the author of that book never intended to teach us the worship of images, nor the invocation of saints, nor transubstantiation, nor purgatory. A moderate capacity may conclude, that the scriptures, by attributing to Jesus Christ the names, the perfections, the works, and the worship of God, mean to teach us that he is God. A moderate capacity is capable of discovering, that the same scriptures, by comparing us to the deaf, the blind, the dead, the *things which are not*, 1 Cor. i. 28. intend to teach us that we have need of grace, and that it is impossible to be saved without its assistance. Men, who have not genius and penetration enough to comprehend these truths, would not be capable of determining whether the attestation of one sent from the dead were inclusive or demonstrative. But infidels are rarely found among people of the stupid class; their fault is, in general, the believing of too much, and not the crediting

crediting of too little. Let us pass, then, to the next article.

2. We have put into a second class *negligent infidels*, those, who refuse to believe, because they will not take the pains to examine. Let us prove the truth of the proposition in the text in regard to them, and let us shew that if they resist ordinary evidence, *neither would they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

Careless people are extremely rash, if they require new proofs of the truth of christianity. If, indeed, they had made laborious searches; if they had weighed our arguments; if they had examined our systems; if, after all their inquiries, they had not been able to discover any thing satisfactory on the side of religion; if our gospel were destitute of proof; if, notwithstanding this defect, God would condemn them for not believing, and, instead of proposing new arguments, would insist on their yielding to arguments, which neither persuaded the judgment, nor affected the heart; they would have reason to complain. But how astonishing is the injustice and ingratitude of mankind! God hath revealed himself to them in the most tender and affectionate manner. He hath announced those truths, in which they are the most deeply interested, a hell, a heaven, a solemn alternative of endless felicity, or eternal misery. He hath accompanied these truths with a thousand plain proofs, proofs of fact, proofs of reason, proofs of sentiment. He hath omitted nothing, that is adapted to the purposes of convincing and persuading us. Careless unbelievers will not deign to look at these arguments; they will not condescend to dig the field, in which God hath hid his treasure; they choose rather to wander after a thousand vain and useless objects, and to be a burden to themselves through the fatigues of idleness, than to confine themselves to the study of religion; and, at length, they complain that religion is obscure. They, who attest the truth to you, are venerable persons. They tell you, they have read, weighed, and examined the matter, and they offer to explain, to prove, to demonstrate it to you. All this does not signify, you will not honour them with your attention. They exhort you, and assure you, that salvation, that your souls, that eternal felicity are articles of the utmost importance, and require a serious attention: It does not signify, none of these considerations move you; and, as we said just now, you choose

rather

rather to attach yourselves to trite and trifling affairs; you choose rather to spend your time in tedious and insipid talk; you choose rather to exhaust your strength in the insupportable langours of idleness, than to devote one year, one month, one day, of your lives to the examination of religion: and after you have gone this perpetual round of negligence, you complain of God; it is he, who conducts you through vallies of darkness; it is he, who leads you into inextricable labyrinths of illusions and doubts! Ought the Deity, then, to regulate his œconomy by your caprices; ought he to humour your wild fancies, and to reveal himself exactly in the way, and punctually at the time, which you shall think proper to prescribe to him?

This is not all. It is certain, were God to grant persons of this character that indulgence, which the wicked rich man required; were God actually to evoke the dead from the other world to reveal what was doing there; it is very plain, they would receive no conviction, and the same fund of negligence, which prevents their adherence to religion now, would continue an invincible obstacle to their faith, even after it had been confirmed in a new and extraordinary manner. This is not a paradox, it is a demonstration. The apparition in question would require a chain of principles and consequences. It would be liable to a great number of difficulties, and difficulties greater than those, which are now objected against religion. It must be inquired first, whether he, who saw the apparition, were free from all disorder of mind when he saw it, or whether it were not the effect of a momentary insanity, or of a profound reverie. It must be examined further, whether the apparition really came from the other world, or whether it were not exhibited by the craft of some head of a party, like those, which are seen in monasteries, like those, which were rumoured about at the reformation to impose on the credulity of the populace: many instances of which may be seen in *a treatise on spectres*, written by one of our divines*. On supposition that it were a dead person sent from the other world, it would be necessary to examine, whether he were sent by God; or by the enemy of our salvation, who, under a pretence of reforming us, was setting snares for our innocence, and creating scruples in our minds. If it were proved that the vision came from

* Lavater.

from God, it must still be inquired, whether it were an effect of the judgment of that God, who judicially hardens some, by *sending them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, because they received not the love of the truth*, 2 Thess. ii. 2. or whether it were an effect of his grace, condescending to smooth the path of religion. All these questions, and a thousand more of the same kind, which naturally belong to this matter, would require time, and study, and pains. They would require the merchant to suspend his commercial business, the libertine to lay aside his pleasures, the soldier to quit for a while his profession of arms, and to devote himself to retirement and meditation. They would require them to consult reason, scripture, and history. The same fund of carelessness, that now causeth the obstinacy of our infidel, would cause it then, and would prevent his undertaking that examination, which would be absolutely necessary in order to determine whether the apparition proved the truth of that religion, which it attested, and whether all the difficulties, that attended it, could be removed. We may then say in regard to idle infidels, *they have Moses, and the prophets; let them hear them. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

3. The same observations which we have just now made, in regard to negligent people, are equally applicable to a third order of persons, whom we have called *witty infidels*, and we class them by themselves only on account of their rank in the world, and of the ascendency which they know how to obtain over the hearts of mankind. We denominate those witty infidels, who, agreeably to the taste of the last age, have not cultivated their geniusses with a sound and rational philosophy: but have made an ample collection of all the tinsel of the sciences (pardon this expression,) and have polished and enriched their fancies at the expence of their judgments. They are quick at repartee, smart in answering: their wit sparkles, and their railleries bite, and, being infatuated with a conceit of their own superiority, they dispense with those rules of examination, in their own favour, to which the rest of mankind are confined, and study only to excel in substituting just for solid argument. Dispute as long as we will with a man of this character, we can never obtain an exact answer. His first reply is a bit of historical erudition. Next he will quote one line from Horace, and two from Juvenal, and, by eluding in this manner our arguments and objections, he

he will think himself the victor because he knew how to avoid the combat, and he will, therefore, think himself authorized to persist in infidelity.

The same reflections which regard the negligent infidel, are applicable to him, whom we oppose in this article. It is neither agreeable to the justice, nor to the wisdom of God, to employ new evidence in his favour. Not to his justice; for how can a man, who is profane by profession, a man, who for the sake of rendering himself agreeable to his companions, and of procuring the reputation of ingenuity, ridicules the most grave and serious truths, declares open war with God, and jests with the most sacred things, how can a man of this character be an object of the love of God? Why should God alter the œconomy of his Spirit and grace in his favour? Neither is it agreeable to his wisdom: but, as what we have said on the foregoing article, may be applied to this, we pass to the fourth class of unbelievers, whom we have denominated interested infidels, infidels, the gratifications of whose passions render the destruction of christianity necessary to them.

4. *Infidels through depraved passions*, it must be granted, are very numerous. I cannot help asking, why, on every other article but that of religion, our infidels content themselves with a certain degree of evidence, whereas on this they cannot see in the clearest light? The more we examine, the clearer we perceive, that the reason originates in the passions: other subjects either very little, or not at all, interest their passions: these they see; religion sways the passions; to religion therefore they are blind. Whether the sun revolve around the earth, to illuminate it; or whether the earth revolve around the sun, to beg, as it were, light and influence from it: whether matter be infinitely divisible; or whether there be atoms, properly so called: whether there be a vacuum in nature? or whether nature abhor a void: take which side we will on these questions, we may continue covetous or ambitious, imperious, oppressive, and proud. Pastors may be negligent, parents careless, children disobedient, friends faithless. But whether there be a God: whether *he have appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness*, Acts xvii. 32. whether an eye, an invisible eye watch all our actions, and discover all our secret thoughts: these are questions, which shock our prejudices, attack our passions, thwart and disconcert all our whole system of cupidity.

Unbelievers, whose passions are interested in infidelity, are affected in this manner; and nothing can be easier to prove, than that the resurrection of a dead person would produce no conviction of truth in them. Enter into your own hearts, my brethren; the proof of our proposition may be found there. The sentiments of the heart have a close connection with the ideas of the mind, and our passions resemble prisms, which divide every ray, and colour every object with an artificial hue.

For example: Employ a sensible christian to reconcile two enemies, and you will admire the wise and equitable manner, in which he would refute every sophism, that passion could invent. If the ground of complaint should be exaggerated, he would instantly hold the balance of equity, and retrench what anger may have added to truth. If the offended should say, he hath received a grievous injury, he would instantly answer, that between two jarring christians, it is immaterial to inquire, in this case, the degree of iniquity and irrationality in the offence; the immediate business, he would say, is the reasonableness of forgiveness. If the offended should allege, that he hath often forgiven, he would reply, this is exactly the case between the Judge of the world and his offending creatures, and yet, he would add, the insulting of a thousand perfections, the forgetting of a thousand favours, the falsifying of a thousand oaths, the violating of a thousand resolutions, do not prevent God from opening the treasures of his mercy to us. If the complainant should have recourse to the ordinary subterfuge, and should protest that he had no animosity in his heart, only he is resolved to have no future intimacy with a man so odious, he would dissipate the gross illusion by urging the example of a merciful God, who doth not content himself with merely forgiving us, but, in spite of all our most enormous crimes, uniteth himself to us by the tenderest relations. Lovely morality, my brethren! Admirable effort of a mind, contemplating truth without prejudice and passion! But place this arbitrator, who preacheth such a morality, in different circumstances. Instead of a referee, make him a party; instead of a mediator between contending parties, put him in the place of one of them. Employ his own arguments to convince him, and, astonishing! he will consider each as a sophism, for all his arguments now stand at the tribunal of a heart full of wrath and revenge. So true it is, that our passions alter our ideas, and that the clearest

clearest arguments are divested of all their evidence, when they appear before an interested man.

Do you seriously think, that the divines of the church of Rome, when they dispute with us, for example, on the doctrines of indulgences and purgatory, do you really think, they require proofs and arguments of us? Not they. The more clearly we reason against them, the more furiously are they irritated against us. Me-thinks I see them calculating the profits of their doctrines to themselves, consulting that scandalous book, in which the price of every crime is rated, so much for a murder, so much for assassination, so much for incest, and finding in each part of the inexhaustible revenue of the sins of mankind, arguments to establish their belief*. Thus our interested infidels reject the clearest arguments. It is a fixed point with them, that the religion which indulgeth their passions, is the best religion, and that which restrains them most, the worst. This is the rule, this is the touchstone, by which they examine all things. The more proofs we produce for religion, the more we prejudice them against religion; because the more forcible our arguments are, the more effectually we oppose their passions, and the more we oppose their passions, the more we alienate them from that religion which opposeth them.

* Mr. Saurin means *the tax book of the Roman chancery*, which we have mentioned in the preface to the 1st. vol. This scandalous book was first printed at Rome in 1514, then at Cologne in 1515, at Paris in 1520, and often at other places since. It is entitled, *Regule, Constitutiones, Reservationis Cancellarie S. Domini nostri Leonis Pape decimi, &c.*

There we meet with such articles as these.

Absolution for killing ones father or mother, 1 ducat---v carlins.

Ditto for all the acts of lewdness committed by a clerk, with a dispensation to be capable of taking orders, and to hold ecclesiastical benefits, &c. - - - 36 tourn. 3 duc.

Do. for one who shall keep a concubine, with a dispensation to take orders, &c. - - - 21 tour. 5 duc. 9 carl.

As if this traffic were not scandalous enough of itself, it is added, *Et nota diligenter, &c. Take notice particularly, that such graces and dispensations are not granted to the* POOR; *for, not having wherewith to pay, they cannot be* COMFORTED.

The zeal of the reformers against the church of Rome ceaseth to appear intemperate in my eye, when I consider these detestable enormities.

I appeal to experience. The scripture affords us a plain example, and a full comment, in the behaviour of the unbelieving Jews who lived in the time of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ preached; he condemned the prejudices of the synagogue; he subverted the favourite carnal systems of the Jews; he attacked the vices of their superiors; he preached against the irregularity of their morals; he unmasked the hypocritical pharisees. These attacks were sufficient to excite their rage and madness; and they being disposed to gratify their anger, examined the doctrine of Jesus Christ only for the sake of finding fault with it. Jesus Christ must be destroyed; for this purpose, snares must be laid for his innocence, his doctrine must be condemned, and he must be proved, if possible, a false Messiah. They interrogate him on articles of religion and policy; but Jesus Christ gives satisfactory answers to all their questions. They examine his morals; but every step of his life appears wise and good. They sift his conversation; but every expression *is always with grace, seasoned with salt*, Col. iv. 6. None of these schemes will effect their designs. The man, say they, preacheth a new doctrine; if he were sent of God, he would produce some proof of his mission; Moses and the prophets wrought miracles. Jesus Christ performeth miracles, he heals the sick, raises the dead, calms the winds and the waves, and altereth all the laws of nature. He operateth more than enough to persuade impartial minds. But their passions suggest answers. *This fellow doth not cast out devils*, say they, *but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils*, Matt. xii. 24. But Lazarus, who was raised from the dead, and who is now living among you, speaks in favour of Jesus Christ; Lazarus must be made away with; he must be a second time laid in the tomb; all the traces of the glory of Jesus Christ must be taken away; and that light, which is already too clear, and which will be hereafter still clearer, must be extinguished, lest it should discover, expose, and perplex us.

This is a natural image of a passionate infidel. Passion blinds him to the most evident truths. It is impossible to convince a man who is determined not to be convinced. One disposition, essential to the knowing of truth, is a sincere love to it; *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*, Psal. xxv. 14. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself*, John vii. 17. *This is the condemnation,*

demnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil, chap. iii. 19.

5. We come finally, to *the philosophical infidel;* to him, who, if we believe him, is neither blinded by prejudices, nor prevented by negligence, nor infatuated by his imagination, nor beguiled by irregular passions. Hear him. He assures you, the only wish that animates him, is that of knowing the truth, and that he is resolved to obey it, find it where he will: But after he hath agitated a thousand questions, after he hath undertaken a thousand investigations, and consulted a thousand volumes, he hath found nothing satisfactory in proof of christianity: in short, he says he is an unbeliever only because he cannot meet with any motives of belief. Can it be said to such a man, *neither wilt thou be persuaded, though one rose from the dead?*

We will reply presently. But allow us first to ask a previous question. Are there any infidels of this kind? Is the man whom we have described, a real or an imaginary being? What a question! say you. What! can a man, who devotes his whole life to meditation and study, a man, who hath searched all the writings of antiquity, who hath disintangled and elucidated the most dark and difficult passages, who hath racked his invention to find solutions and proofs, who is nourished and kept alive, if the expression may be used, with the discovery of truth; a man, beside, who seems to have renounced the company of the living, and has not the least relish for even the innocent pleasures of society, so far is he from running into their grossest diversions; can such a man be supposed to be an unbeliever for any other reason than because he thinks it his duty to be so? Can any, but rational motives induce him to disbelieve?

Undoubtedly; and it would discover but little knowledge of the human heart, were we to imagine either that such an infidel was under the dominion of gross sensual passions, or that he was free from the government of other, and more refined passions. A desire of being distinguished, a love of fame, the glory of passing for a superior genius, for one, who hath freed himself from vulgar errors; these are, in general, powerful and vigorous passions, and these are usually the grand springs of a pretended philosophical infidelity. One undeniable proof of the truth of my assertion is his eagerness in publishing and propagating infidelity. Now this can proceed from nothing but from a principle of vain

vain glory. For, why should his opinions be spread? For our parts, when we publish our systems, whether we publish truth or error, we have weighty reasons for publication. Our duty, we think, engageth us to propagate what we believe. In our opinion, they, who are ignorant of our doctrine, are doomed to endless misery. Is not this sufficient to make us lift up our voices? But you, who believe neither God nor judgment, nor heaven, nor hell; what madness inspires you to publish your sentiments? It is, say you, a desire of freeing society from the slavery, that religion imposeth on them. Miserable freedom! a freedom from imaginary errors, that plungeth us into an ocean of real miseries, that saps all the bases of society, that sows divisions in families, that excites rebellions in states, that deprives virtue of all its motives, all its inducements, all its supports. And what, pray, but religion, can comfort us under the sad catastrophes, to which all are subject, and from which the highest human grandeur is not exempt? What, but religion, can conciliate our minds to the numberless afflictions, which necessarily attend human frailty? Can any thing but religion calm our consciences under their agitations and troubles? Above all, what can relieve us in dying illnesses, when lying on a sick-bed between present and real evils, and the frightful gloom of a dark futurity? Ah! if religion, which produceth such real effects, be a deception, leave me in possession of my deception; I desire to be deceived, and I take him for my most cruel enemy, who offers to open my eyes.

But let us give a more direct answer. You are a philosopher. You have examined religion. You find nothing, that convinces you. Difficulties and doubts arise from every part; the prophecies are obscure; the doctrines are contradictory; the precepts are ambiguous; the miracles are uncertain. You require some new prodigy, and, in order to your full persuasion of the truth of immortality, you wish, some one would come from the dead, and attest it. I answer, if you reason consequentially, the motive would be useless, and, having resisted ordinary proofs, you ought, if you reason consequentially, to refuse to believe the very evidence, which you require. Let us confine ourselves to some one article to convince you, suppose, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The apostles bore witness that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. This is our argument. To you it appears jejune and futile, and your undetermined mind floats between

two

two opinions; either the apostles, you think, were deceived; or they deceived others. These are your objections. Now if either of these objections be well-grounded, I affirm, you ought not to believe, *though one rose from the dead* to persuade you.

The apostles were deceived you say. But this objection, if well grounded, lies against not only one but twelve apostles; not only against twelve apostles, but against more than *five hundred brethren;* not only against more *than five hundred brethren,* 1 Cor. xv. 6. but against all, who attested the miracles wrought in favour of the resurrection of Christ: all these persons, who, in other cases were rational, must have been insane, had they thought they had seen what they had not seen, heard what they had not heard, conversed with a man, with whom they had not conversed, wrought miracles which they had not wrought. They must be supposed to have persisted in these extravagances not only for an hour, or a day, but for forty days, yea for the whole course of their lives. Now, I demand, since an allusion produced a persuasion so clear and full, how could you assure yourself that you was not deceived in examining that new evidence, which you require? If so many different persons may be justly taxed with absence of mind, or insanity, what assurance would you have that you was not thrown into a disordered state of mind at the sight of an apparition?

Let us reason in a similar manner on your second supposition. If the apostles were impostors, there must have been in the world men so contrary to all the rest of their species, as to suffer imprisonment, punishment, and death, for the support of a falshood. This absurdity must have intoxicated not only one person, but all the thousands, who sealed the gospel with their blood. The apostles must have been destitute of every degree of common sense, if, intending to deceive the world, they had acted in a manner the least likely of any to abuse it; marking places, times, witnesses, and all other circumstances, the most proper to discover their imposture. Moreover, their enemies must have conspired with them in the illusion. Jews, gentiles, and christians, divided on every other article, must have all agreed in this, because no one ever confuted; What am I saying? No one ever accused our sacred authors of imposture, although nothing could have been easier, if they had been impostors. In one word, a thousand strange suppositions must be made. But I demand again, if these suppositions have any likelihood,

God

God have given to falshood so many characters of truth, if Satan be allowed to act his part so dexterously to seduce us, how can you assure yourself that God will not permit the father of falshood to seduce you also by an apparition? How could you assure yourself afterward that he had not done it? Let us conclude, then, in regard to unbelievers of every kind, that if the ordinary means of grace be inadequate to the production of faith, extraordinary prodigies would be so too.

Let us proceed now, in brief, to prove, that motives to virtue are sufficient to induce men to be virtuous, as we have proved that motives of credibility are sufficient to confound the objections of infidels.

We believe, say you, the truths of religion: but a thousand snares are set for our innocence, and we are betrayed into immorality and guilt. Our minds seduce us. Examples hurry us away. The propensities of our own hearts pervert us. A new miracle would awake us from our indolence, and would reanimate our zeal. We have two things to answer.

1. We deny the effect, which you expect from this apparition. This miracle will be wrought either seldom, or frequently. If it were wrought every day, it would on that very account, lose all its efficacy; and as the Israelites, through a long habit of seeing miracles, were familiarised to them, till they received no impressions from them, so it would be with you. One while they saw *waters turned into blood*, another they beheld the *first born of Egypt smitten;* now the sea divided to open a passage for them, and then the heavens rained bread, and rivers flowed from a rock, *yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies*, Psal. lxxviii. 44. 51. 56. You yourselves every day see the heavens and the earth, the works of nature and the properties of its elementary parts, a rich variety of divine workmanship, which, by proving the existence of the Creator, demand the homage, that you ought to render to him, and as you see them without emotions of virtue, so would you harden your hearts against the remonstrances of the dead, were they frequently to rise, and to exhort you to repentance.

Were the miracles wrought now and then, what you experience on other occasions, would infallibly come to pass on this. You would be affected for a moment, but the impressions would wear off, and you would fall back into your former

former sins. The proofs of this conjecture are seen every day. People, who have been often touched and penetrated at the sight of certain objects, have as often returned to their old habits, when the power of the charm hath abated. Have you never read the heart of an old miser at the funeral of one of his own age? Methinks I hear the old man's soliloquy: "I am full fourscore years of age, I have outlived the time, which God usually allots to mankind, and I am now a pall-bearer at a funeral. The melancholy torches are lighted, the attendants are all in mourning, the grave yawns for its prey. For whom is all this funeral pomp? What part am I acting in this tragedy? Shall I ever attend another funeral, or is my own already preparing? Alas! if a few remains of life and motion tell me I live, the burying of my old friend assures me I must soon die. The wrinkles, which disfigure my face; the weight of years, that makes me stoop; the infirmities, which impair my strength; the tottering of my enfeebled carcase; all second the voice of my deceased friend, and warn me of my approaching dissolution. Yet what am I about? I am building houses, I am amassing money, I am pleasing myself with the hopes of adding to my capital this year, and of increasing my income the next. O fatal blindness! folly of a heart, which avarice hath rendered insatiable! Henceforth I will think only about dying, I will go and order my funeral, put on my shroud, lie in my coffin, and render myself insensible to every care except that of *dying the death of the righteous*," Numb. xxiii. 10. Thus talks the old man to himself, as he goes to a grave, and you think, perhaps, his life, will resemble his reflections, and that he is going to become charitable, liberal, and disinterested. No, no, all his reflections will vanish with the objects, that produced them, and as soon as he returns from the funeral, he will forget he is mortal. In like manner, the return of one from the dead would perhaps affect you on the spot, you would make many fine reflections, and form a thousand new resolutions: but when the phantom had disappeared, your depravity would take its old course, and all your reflections would evaporate. This is our first answer.

We add, secondly. A man persuaded of the divinity of religion, a man, who notwithstanding that persuasion, persisteth in impenitence, a man of this character hath carried obduracy to so high a pitch, that it is not conceivable any new motives would alter him. He is already so guilty, that

far from having any right to demand extraordinary means, he ought rather to expect to be deprived of the ordinary means, which he hath both received and resisted. Let us dive into the conscience of this sinner; let us for a moment fathom the depth of the human heart, let us hear his detestable purposes. "I believe the truth of religion; I believe there is a God; God, I believe, seeth all my actions, and from his penetration none of my thoughts are hid; I believe he holds the thunder in his hand, and one act of his will is sufficient to strike me dead; I believe these truths, and they are so solemn, that I ought to be influenced to my duty by them. However, it does not signify, I will sin, although I am in his immediate presence; I will *provoke the Lord to jealousy*, as if I were *stronger than he*, 1 Cor. x. 22. and the sword that hangs over my head, and hangs only by a single thread, shall convey no terror into my mind. I believe the truth of religion; God hath for me, I think, *a love, which passeth knowledge;* I believe, he gave me my existence, and to him I owe my hands, my eyes, my motion, my life, my light; moreover, I believe he gave me his Son, his blood, his tenderest mercy and love. All these affecting objects ought indeed to change my heart, to make me blush for my ingratitude, and to induce me to render him love for love, life for life. But no, I will resist all these innumerable motives, I will affront my benefactor, I will wound that heart, that is filled with pity for me, I will *crucify the Lord of glory afresh*, Heb. vi. 6. If his love trouble me, I will forget it. If my conscience reproach me, I will stifle it, and sin with boldness. I believe the truth of religion; there is, I believe a heaven, a *presence* of God in which there *is a fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore*, Psalm xvi. 2. The idea of felicity consummate in glory ought, I must own, to make me superior to worldly pleasures, and I ought to prefer *the fountain of living waters* before my own *broken cisterns, that can hold no water*, Jer. ii. 13. but it does not signify, I will sacrifice *the things, that are not seen, to the things, that are seen*, 2 Cor. iv. 18. the glorious delights of virtue to *the pleasures of sin*, and the *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, Heb. xi. 25. 2 Cor. iv. 17. to momentary temporal pursuits. I believe the truth of religion; there is, I believe, a hell for the impenitent, there are *chains of darkness, a worm, that dieth not, a fire that is never quenched*, 2 Pet. ii. 4. Mark ix. 44.

In

In hell, I believe, there are pains far more excruciating than the most violent agonies here, worse than the gout and the stone, less tolerable than the sufferings of a galley-slave, the breaking of a criminal on the wheel, or the tearing asunder of a martyr with red hot pincers of iron. I believe these things; and I am, I know, in the case of them, against whom these punishments are denounced: freedom from all these is set before me, and I may, if I will, avoid *the bottomless abyss*, Rev. ix. 1. but no matter, I will precipitate myself headlong into the horrible gulf. A small pittance of reputation, a very little glory, an inconsiderable sum of money, a few empty and deceitful pleasures will serve to conceal those perils, the bare ideas of which would terrify my imagination, and subvert my designs. Devouring worm! chains of darkness! everlasting burnings! infernal spirits! fire! sulphur! smoke! remorse! rage! madness! despair! idea, frightful idea of a thousand years, of ten thousand years, of ten millions of years, of endless revolutions of absorbing eternity! You shall make no impressions on my mind. It shall be my fortitude to dare you, my glory to affront you.

Thus reasons the sinner who believes; but who lives in impenitence. This is the heart that wants a new miracle to affect it. But I demand, can you conceive any prodigy that can soften a soul so hard? I ask, if so many motives be useless, can you conceive any others more effectual? Would you have God attempt to gain an ascendency over you by means more influential? Would you have him give you more than immortality, more than his Son, more than heaven? Would you have him present objects to you more frightful than hell and eternity?

We know what you will reply. You will say, we talk fancifully, and fight with shadows of our own creation. If the sinner, say you, would but think of these things, they would certainly convert him: but he forgets them, and therefore he is more to be pitied for his distraction, than to be blamed for his insensibility. Were a person to rise from the dead to recal, and to fix his attention, he would awake from his stupor. Idle sophism! As if distraction, amidst numberless objects that demand his attention, were not the highest degree of insensibility itself. But why do I speak of distraction? I have now before me clear, full, and decisive evidence, that even while sinners have all these objects in full view, they derive no sanctifying influence from them.

Yes, I have made the experiment, and consequently my evidence is undeniable. I see that all the motives of love, fear, and horror united, are too weak to convert one obstinate sinner. My evidences, my brethren, will you believe it, are yourselves. Contradict me; refute me. Am I not now presenting all these motives to you? Do not speak of distraction, for I look at you, and you hear me. I present all these motives to you: this God, the witness and judge of your hearts; these treasures of mercy which he opens in your favour; this Jesus, who amidst the most excruciating agonies, expired for you. To you we open the kingdom of heaven, and draw back all the veils that hide futurity from you. To you, to you we present the devils with their rage, hell with its torments, eternity with its horrors. We conjure you this moment, by the solemnity of all these motives, to return to God. I repeat it again, you cannot pretend distraction now, you cannot plead forgetfulness now, nor can you avoid to day, either the glory of conversion, or the shame of an impenitence that resisteth the most solemn and pathetic objects. But is it not true that none of these motives touch you? I mean they do not reform you. For it doth not argue any piety, if after we have meditated on a subject, chosen our sentiments, and our expressions, and with an assemblage of scripture-imagery, covered the pleasures of paradise, and the horrors of hell, with colouring the best adapted to exhibit their nature, and to affect yours; I say, it requireth no pity to feel a moving of the animal spirits, a slight emotion of the heart. You are just as much affected with a representation, which you know is fiction, and exhibited by actors in borrowed guise; and you do us very little honour by giving us what you bestow on theatrical declaimers. But is any one of you so affected with these motives, as to go without delay to make restitution of ill-gotten gain, to embrace an enemy, to break off an impure connection? I ask again, Can you contradict me? Can you refute me? Alas! we know what a sermon can do, and we have reason for affirming, that no known motives will change some of our hearts, although we do attend to them; and for inferring this just consequence, a thousand new motives would be as useless as the rest.

In this manner we establish the truth, thus we prove the sufficiency of the christian religion, thus we justify providence against the unjust reproaches of infidel and impenitent sinners, and thus, in spite of ourselves, we trace out our

own

own condemnation. For since we continue, some of us in unbelief, and others of us in impenitence, we are driven either to tax God with employing means inadequate to the ends of instruction and conversion, or to charge the guilt of not improving them on ourselves. We have seen that our disorders do not flow from the first: but that they actually do proceed from the last of these causes. *Unto thee*, then, *O Lord! belongeth righteousness: but unto us confusion of face this day*, Dan. ix. 7.

Here we would finish this discourse, had we not engaged at first to answer a difficult question, which naturally ariseth from our text, and from the manner in which we have discussed it. Could the Jews, to whom the state of the soul after death was very little known, be numbered among those, who would *not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead?* We have two answers to this seeming difficulty.

1. We could deny that notion, which creates this difficulty, and affirm, that the state of the soul after death was much better understood by the Jews, than you suppose. We could quote many passages from the old testament, where the doctrines of heaven and of hell, of judgment, and of the resurrection, are revealed; and we could shew that the Jews were so persuaded of the truth of these doctrines, that they considered the Sadducees, who doubted of them, as sectaries distinguished from the rest of the nation.

But as our strait limits will not allow us to do justice to these articles by fully discussing them, we will take another method of answering the objection.

2. The Jews had as good evidence of the divine inspiration of the old testament as christians have of that of the new. So that it might as truly be said to a Jew, as to a christian, If thou resist the ordinary evidence of the truth of revelation, *neither wouldest thou be persuaded though one rose from the dead* to attest it.

It is questionable, whether the Jewish revelation explained the state of souls after death so clearly that Jesus Christ had sufficient ground for his proposition. But were we to grant what this question implies; were we to suppose, that the state of souls after death was as much unknown as our querist pretends; it would be still true, that it was incongruous with the justice and wisdom of God to employ new means of conversion in favour of a Jew, who resisted Moses and the prophets. Our proof follows.

Moses

Moses and the prophets taught sublime notions of God. They represented him as a being supremely wise, and supremely powerful. Moreover, Moses and the prophets expressly declared, that God, of whom they gave such sublime ideas, would display his power, and his wisdom, to render those completely happy, who obeyed his laws, and them completely miserable who durst affront his authority. A Jew who was persuaded, on the one hand, that Moses and the prophets spoke on the part of God; and on the other, that Moses and the prophets, whose mission was unsuspected, declared that God would render those completely happy, who obeyed his laws, and them completely miserable, who durst affront his authority; a Jew, who in spite of this persuasion, persisted in impenitence, was so obdurate, that his conversion by means of any new motives was inconceivable: at least, he was so culpable, that he could not equitably require God to employ new means for his conversion.

What doth the gospel say more on the punishments, which God will inflict on the wicked, than Moses and the prophets said? (I speak on the supposition of those who deny any particular explications of the doctrine of immortality in the old testament.) What did Jesus Christ teach more than Moses and the prophets taught? He entered into a more particular detail, he told his hearers, there was *weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, a worm that died not, and a fire that was not quenched.* But the general thesis, that God would display his attributes in punishing the wicked, and in rewarding the good, this general thesis was as well known to the Jews as it is to christians; and this general thesis is a sufficient ground for the words of the text.

The most that can be concluded from this objection, is, not that the proposition of Jesus Christ was not verified in regard to the Jews, but that it is much more verified in regard to christians: not that the Jews, who resisted Moses and the prophets, were not very guilty, but that christians, who resist the gospel, are much more guilty. We are fully convinced of the truth of this assertion. We wish your minds were duly affected with it. To this purpose we proceed to the application.

First, We address ourselves to infidels. O that you would for once seriously enter into the reasonable disposition of desiring to know and to obey the truth. At least examine, and see. If after all your pains, you can find nothing credible in the christian religion, we own we are strangers to the

the human heart, and we must give you up, as belonging to a species of beings different from ours. But what irritates us is to see, that among the many infidels, who are endeavouring to destroy the vitals of religion, there is scarcely one to be found, whose erroneous principles do not originate in a bad heart. It is the heart that disbelieves; it is the heart which must be attacked; it is the heart that must be convinced.

People doubt because they will doubt. Dreadful disposition! Can nothing discover thine enormity? What is infidelity good for? By what charm doth it lull the soul into a willing ignorance of its origin and end? If, during the short space of a mortal life, the love of independence tempt us to please ourselves with joining this monstrous party: how dear will the union cost us, when we come to die!

O! were my tongue dipped in the gall of celestial displeasure, I would describe to you the state of a man expiring in the cruel uncertainties of unbelief; who seeth, in spite of himself, yea, in spite of himself, the truth of that religion, which he hath endeavoured to no purpose to eradicate from his heart. Ah! see! every thing contributes to trouble him now. "I am dying—I despair of recovering—Physicians have given me over—The sighs and tears of my friends are useless—yet they have nothing else to bestow—Medicines take no effect—consultations come to nothing—alas! not you—not my little fortune—the world cannot cure me—I must die—It is not a preacher—it is not a religious book—it is not a trifling declaimer—it is death itself that preacheth to me—I feel, I know not what, shivering cold in my blood—I am in a dying sweat—my feet, my hands, every part of my body is wasted—I am more like a corpse than a living body—I am rather dead than alive—I must die—Whither am I going? What will become of me? What will become of my body? My God! what a frightful spectacle! I see it! The horrid torches—the dismal shroud—the coffin—the pall—the tolling bell—the subterranean abode—carcases—worms—putrefaction—What will become of my soul? I am ignorant of its destiny—I am tumbling headlong into eternal night—my infidelity tells me, my soul is nothing but a portion of subtile matter—another world a vision—immortality a fancy—But yet, I feel, I know not what, that troubles my infidelity—annihilation, terrible as it is, would appear tolerable to me, were not the ideas of heaven and hell to present themselves to me, in spite of myself—But I see that heaven,

heaven, that immortal mansion of glory shut against me—I see it at an immense distance—I see it a place, which my crimes forbid me to enter—I see hell—hell, which I have ridiculed—it opens under my feet—I hear the horrible groans of the damned—the smoke of the bottomless pit choaks my words, and wraps my thoughts in suffocating darkness."

Such is the infidel on a dying bed. This is not an imaginary flight: it is not an arbitary invention, it is a description of what we see every day in the fatal visits, to which our ministry engageth us, and to which God seems to call us to be sorrowful witnesses of his displeasure and vengeance. This is what infidelity comes to. This is what infidelity is good for. Thus most sceptics die, although, while they live, they pretend to free themselves from vulgar errors. I ask again, what charms are there in a state, that hath such dreadful consequences? How is it possible for men, rational men, to carry their madness to such an excess?

Without doubt it would excite many murmurs in this auditory; certainly we should be taxed with strangely exceeding the matter, were we to venture to say, that many of our hearers are capable of carrying their corruption to as great a length, as I have described. Well! we will not say so. We know your delicacy too well. But allow us to give you a task. We propose a problem to the examination of each of you.

Who, of two men, appears most odious to you? One resolves to refuse nothing to his senses, to gratify all his wishes without restraint, and to procure all the pleasures, that a worldly life can afford. Only one thought disturbs him, the thought of religion. The idea of an offended benefactor, of an angry supreme Judge, of eternal salvation neglected, of hell contemned; each of these ideas poisons the pleasures, which he wishes to pursue. In order to conciliate his desires with his remorse, he determines to try to get rid of the thought of religion. Thus he becomes an obstinate atheist for the sake of becoming a peaceable libertine, and he cannot sin quietly till he hath flattered himself into a belief, that religion is chimerical. This is the case of the first man.

The second man resolves to refuse nothing to his sensual appetites, to gratify all his wishes without restraint, and to procure all the pleasures, that a worldly life can afford. The same thought agitates him, the thought of religion. The idea of an offended benefactor, of an angry supreme Judge, of

of an eternal salvation neglected, of hell contemned, each of these ideas poisons the pleasures, which he wishes to pursue. He takes a different method of conciliating his desires with his remorse. He doth not persuade himself that there is no benefactor: but he rendereth himself insensible to his benefits. He doth not flatter himself into the disbelief of a supreme Judge: but he dares his majestic authority. He doth not think salvation a chimera: but he hardens his heart against its attractive charms. He doth not question whether there be a hell: but he ridicules its torments. This is the case of the second man. The task, which we take the liberty to assign you, is to examine, but to examine coolly and deliberately, which of these two men is the most guilty.

Would to God, our hearers had no other interest in the examination of this question than what compassion for the misery of others gave them! May the many false christians, who live in impenitence, and who felicitate themselves for not living in infidelity, be sincerely affected, dismayed, and ashamed of giving occasion for the question, whether they be not more odious themselves than those, whom they account the most odious of mankind, I mean, sceptics and atheists! May each of us be enabled to improve the means, which God hath employed to save us! May our faith and obedience be crowned! and may we be admitted with Lazarus into the bosom of the Father of the faithful! The Lord hear our prayers! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XI.

THE ADVANTAGES OF REVELATION.

1 Cor. i. 21.

After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

IT is a celebrated saying of Tertullian, my brethren, that *every mechanic among Christians knew God, and could make him known to others.* Tertullian spoke thus by way of contrast to the conduct of the philosopher Thales toward Crœsus, the king. Crœsus asked this philosopher, *What is God?* Thales, (by the way, some relate the same story of Simonides.) Thales required one day to consider the matter, before he gave his answer. When one day was gone, Crœsus asked him again, *What is God?* Thales intreated two days to consider. When two days were expired, the question was proposed to him again; he besought the king to grant him four days. After four days, he required eight: after eight, sixteen; and in this manner he continued to procrastinate so long, that the king, impatient at his delay, desired to know the reason of it. O king! said Thales, be not astonished that I defer my answer. It is a question in which my insufficient reason is lost. The oftener I ask myself, *What is God?* the more incapable I find myself of answering. New difficulties arise every moment, and my knowledge diminisheth as my inquiries increase.

Tertullian, hereupon, takes an occasion to triumph over the philosophers of paganism, and to make an eulogium on christianity. Thales, the chief of the wise men of Greece;

Thales, who hath added the erudition of Egypt to the wisdom of Greece; Thales cannot inform the king what God is! The meanest christian knows more than he. *What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him: even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God,* 1 Cor. ii. 11. The christian hath *more understanding than all his teachers,* according to the expression of the psalmist: Psal. cxix. 99. for as far as the light of revelation is above that of nature, so far is the meanest christian above the wisest heathen philosopher.

Of this superiority of knowledge we intend to treat to-day. This St. Paul had in view in the first chapters of this epistle, and particularly in the text. But in order to a thorough knowledge of the apostle's meaning, we must explain his terms, and mark the occasion of them. With this explication we begin.

Greece, of which Corinth was a considerable city, was one of those countries which honoured the sciences, and which the sciences honoured in return. It was the opinion there, that the prosperity of a state depends as much on the culture of reason, and on the establishment of literature, as on a well disciplined army, or an advantageous trade: and that neither opulence nor grandeur were of any value in the hands of men, who were destitute of learning and good sense. In this they were worthy of emulation and praise. At the same time, it was very deplorable that their love of learning should often be an occasion of their ignorance. Nothing is more common in academies, and universities, (indeed it is an imperfection almost inseparable from them) than to see each science alternately in vogue; each branch of literature becomes fashionable in its turn, and some doctor presides over reason and good sense, so that sense and reason are nothing without his approbation. In St. Paul's time, philosophy was in fashion in Greece; not a sound, chaste philosophy, that always took reason for its guide, a kind of science, which has made greater progress in our times than in all preceding ages: but a philosophy full of prejudices, subject to the authority of the heads of a sect, which was then most in vogue, expressed politely, and to use the language of St. Paul, proposed *with the words which man's wisdom teacheth,* 1 Cor. ii. 13. Without this philosophy, and this eloquence, people were despised by the Greeks. The apostles were very little versed in these sciences. The gospel they preached was formed upon another plan; and they who preached

preached it, were destitute of these ornaments: accordingly, they were treated by the far greater part with contempt. The want of these was a great offence to the Corinthians. They could not comprehend, that a doctrine, which came from heaven, could be inferior to human sciences. St. Paul intended in this epistle to guard the Corinthians against this objection, and to make an apology for the gospel, and for his ministry. The text is an abridgement of his apology.

The occasion of the words of the text is a key to the sense of each expression; it explains those terms of the apostle, which need explanation, as well as the meaning of the whole proposition; *After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

The *wisdom*, or the *learning*, of which St. Paul speaks, is philosophy. This, I think, is incontestible. The first epistle to the Corinthians, I grant, was written to two sorts of christians, to some, who came from the profession of Judaism, and to others, who came from the profession of paganism. Some commentators doubt, whether by *the wise*, of whom St. Paul often speaks in this chapter, we be to understand Jews, or pagan philosophers: Whether by *wisdom* we be to understand the system of the synagogue, or the system of the porch. They are inclined to take the words in the former sense, because the Jews usually called their divines and philosophers, *wise men*, and gave the name of *wisdom* to every branch of knowledge. Theology they called *wisdom concerning God;* natural philosophy they called *wisdom concerning nature;* astronomy they called *wisdom concerning the stars;* and so of the rest. But although we grant the truth of this remark, we deny the application of it here. It seems very clear to us, that St. Paul, throughout this chapter, gave the pagan philosophers the appellation *wise*, which they affected. The verse, that follows the text, makes this very plain: *the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:* that is to say, the Greeks are as earnestly desirous of philosophy as the Jews of miracles. By *wisdom*, in the text, then, we are to understand philosophy. But the more fully to comprehend the meaning of St. Paul, we must define this philosophy agreeably to the ideas of St. Paul. *Philosophy*, then, *is that science of God, and of the chief good, which is grounded not on the testimony of any superior intelligence, but on the speculations and discoveries of our own reason.*

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There are two more expressions in our text that need explaining: *the foolishness of preaching*, and *them that believe: after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. They who believe*, are a class of people, it is plain, who take a method of knowing God opposite to that of philosophers. Philosophers determine to derive all their notions of God, and of the chief good, from their own speculations. Believers, on the contrary, convinced of the imperfection of their reason, and of the narrow limits of their knowledge, derive their religious ideas from the testimony of a superior intelligence. The superior intelligence, whom they take for their guide, is Jesus Christ: and the testimony, to which they submit, is the gospel. Our meaning will be clearly conveyed by a remarkable passage of Tertullian, who shews the difference between him, whom St. Paul calls *wise*, and him, whom he calls a *believer*. On the famous words of St. Paul to the Colossians, *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy, and vain deceit*, chap. ii. 8. says this father; "St. Paul had seen at Athens that human wisdom, which curtaileth, and disguiseth the truth. He had seen, that some heretics endeavoured to mix that wisdom with the gospel. But what communion hath Jerusalem with Athens? The church with the academy? Heretics with true christians? Solomon's porch is our porch. We have no need of speculation and discussion, after we have known Jesus Christ and his gospel. When we believe we ask nothing more; for it is an article of our faith, that he who believes, needs no other ground of his faith than the gospel." Thus speaks Tertullian.

But why doth St. Paul call the gospel *The foolishness of preaching? It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.* Beside, he calleth it *The foolishness of God, The foolishness of God is wiser than men*, ver. 25. And a little lower, he adds, *God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.*

It is usual with St. Paul, and the style is not peculiar to him, to call an object, not by a name descriptive of its real nature, but by a name expressive of the notions, that are formed of it in the world, and of the effects, that are produced by it. Now, the gospel being considered by Jews and heathens as a foolish system, St. Paul calls it *foolishness*. That this was the apostle's meaning two passages prove.

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The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are FOOLISHNESS UNTO HIM, chap. ii. 14. You see, then, in what sense the gospel is *foolishness;* it is so called, because it appears so to *a natural man.* Again, *We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and* UNTO THE GREEKS FOOLISHNESS. You see in what sense the gospel is called *foolishness;* it is because the doctrine of Jesus Christ crucified, which is the great doctrine of the gospel, was treated as *foolishness.* The history of the preaching of the apostles fully justifies our comment. The doctrines of the gospel, in general, and that of a God-man crucified, in particular, were reputed foolish. "We are accounted *fools,* says Justin Martyr, for giving "such an eminent rank to a crucified man*." The wise "men of the world, says St. Augustine, insult us, and "ask, Where is your reason, and intelligence, when you "worship a man, who was crucified† !"

These two words, *wisdom,* and *foolishness,* being thus explained, methinks, we may easily understand the whole text. *After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. To know God* is a short phrase expressive of an idea of the virtues necessary to salvation; it is equal to the term *theology,* that is science concerning God; a body of doctrine, containing all the truths, which are necessary to salvation. Agreeably to this notion, St. Paul explains the phrase *to know God,* by the expression, *to be saved. After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe:* and, a little lower, what he had called *knowing God,* he calls *knowing the mind of the Lord,* chap. ii. 16. that is to say, knowing that plan of salvation, which God hath formed in regard to man.

When, therefore, the apostle said, *The world by wisdom knew not God,* he meant, that the heathens had not derived from the light of nature all the help necessary to enable them to form adequate notions of God, and of a worship suited to his perfections. Above all, he meant to teach us, that it was impossible for the greatest philosophers to discover by the light of nature all the truths, that compose the system of the gospel, and particularly, the doctrine of a crucified Redeemer

* Apol. Secund. † Serm. viii. de verbo Apost.

Redeemer. The accomplishment of the great mystery of redemption, depended on the pure will of God, and, consequently, it could be known only by revelation. With this view he calls the mysteries of revelation *things, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; but which God hath revealed by his Spirit*, ver. 9, 10.

The apostle saith, *After the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God to save believers by the foolishness of preaching.* That is to say, since the mere systems of reason were eventually insufficient for the salvation of mankind; and since it was impossible that their speculations should obtain the true knowledge of God; God took another way to instruct them: he revealed by preaching the gospel what the light of nature could not discover, so that the system of Jesus Christ, and his apostles, supplied all that was wanting in the systems of the ancient philosophers.

But, it is not in relation to the ancient philosophers only, that we mean to consider the proposition in our text; we will examine it also in reference to modern philosophy. Our philosophers know more than all those of Greece knew: but their science, which is of unspeakable advantage, while it contains itself within its proper sphere, becomes a source of errors, when it is extended beyond it. Human reason now lodgeth itself in new entrenchments, when it refuseth to submit to the faith. It even puts on new armour to attack it, after it hath invented new methods of self-defence. Under pretence that natural science hath made greater progress, revelation is despised. Under pretence that modern notions of God the Creator are purer than those of the ancients, the yoke of God the Redeemer is shaken off. We are going to employ the remaining part of this discourse in justifying the proposition of St. Paul in the sense, that we have given it; we are going to endeavour to prove, that revealed religion hath advantages infinitely superior to natural religion: that the greatest geniusses are incapable of discovering by their own reason all the truths necessary to salvation; and that it displays the goodness of God, not to abandon us to the uncertainties of our own wisdom, but to make us the rich present of revelation.

We will enter into this discussion by placing on the one side a philosopher contemplating the works of nature: on the other a disciple of Jesus Christ receiving the doctrines of revelation. To which we will give four subjects to examine: the attributes of God: the nature of man: the means

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of appeasing the remorse of conscience: and a future state. From their judgments on each of these subjects evidence will arise of the superior worth of that revelation, which some minute philosophers affect to despise, and above which they prefer that rough draught, which they sketch out by their own learned speculations.

I. Let us consider a disciple of natural religion, and a disciple of revealed religion, meditating on the *attributes of God.* When the disciple of natural religion considers the symmetry of this universe; when he observes that admirable uniformity, which appears in the succession of seasons, and in the constant rotation of night and day; when he remarks the exact motions of the heavenly bodies; the flux and reflux of the sea, so ordered that billows, which swell into mountains, and seem to threaten the world with an universal deluge, break away on the shore, and respect on the beach the command of the Creator, who *said* to the sea, *hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,* Job xxxviii. 11. When he attends to all these marvellous works, he will readily conclude, that the Author of nature is a being powerful, and wise. But when he observes winds, tempests, and earthquakes, which seem to threaten the reduction of nature to its primitive chaos; when he sees the sea overflow its banks, and burst the enormous moles, that the industry of mankind had raised; his speculations will be perplexed, he will imagine, he sees characters of imperfection among so many proofs of creative perfection and power.

When he thinks, that God, having enriched the habitable world with innumerable productions of infinite worth to the inhabitant, hath placed man here as a sovereign in a superb palace; when he considers how admirably God hath proportioned the divers parts of the creation to the construction of the human body, the air to the lungs, aliments to the different humours of the body, the medium, by which objects are rendered visible, to the eyes, that, by which sounds are communicated, to the ears; when he remarks how God hath connected man with his own species, and not with animals of another kind; how he hath distributed talents, so that some requiring the assistance of others, all should be mutually united together; how he hath bound men together by invisible ties, so that one cannot see another in pain without a sympathy that inclines him to relieve him; when the dis-

ciple of natural religion meditates on these grand subjects, he concludes that the Author of nature is a beneficent Being. But, when he sees the innumerable miseries, to which men are subject; when he finds, that every creature, which contributes to support, contributes at the same time to destroy us; when he thinks, that the air, which assists respiration, conveys epidemical diseases, and imperceptible poisons; that aliments, which nourish us, are often our bane; that the animals, that serve us, often turn savage against us; when he observes the perfidiousness of society, the mutual industry of mankind in tormenting each other; the arts, which they invent to deprive one another of life; when he attempts to reckon up the innumerable maladies, that consume us; when he considers death, which bows the loftiest heads, dissolves the firmest cements, and subverts the best-founded fortunes; when he makes these reflections, he will be apt to doubt, whether it be goodness, or the contrary attribute, that inclineth the Author of our being to give us existence. When the disciple of natural religion reads those reverses of fortune, of which history furnisheth a great many examples; when he seeth tyrants fall from a pinnacle of grandeur; wicked men often punished by their own wickedness, the avaricious punished by the objects of their avarice, the ambitious by those of their ambition, the voluptuous by those of their voluptuousness; when he perceives, that the laws of virtue are so essential to public happiness, that without them society would become a banditti, at least, that society is more or less happy or miserable, according to its looser or closer attachment to virtue; when he considers all these cases, he will probably conclude, that the Author of this universe is a just and holy Being. But, when he sees tyranny established, vice enthroned, humility in confusion, pride wearing a crown, and love to holiness sometimes exposing people to many and intolerable calamities; he will not be able to justify God, amidst the darkness in which his equity is involved in the government of the world.

But, of all these mysteries, can one be proposed, which the gospel doth not unfold; or, at least, is there one, on which it doth not give us some principles, which are sufficient to conciliate it with the perfections of the Creator, how opposite soever it may seem?

Do the disorders of the world puzzle the disciple of natural religion, and produce difficulties in his mind? With the principles of the gospel I can solve them all. When it is remembered,

membered, that this world hath been defiled by the sin of man, and that he is, therefore, an object of divine displeasure; when the principle is admitted, that the world is not now what it was, when it came out of the hands of God; and that in comparison with its pristine state, it is only a heap of ruins, the truly magnificent, but actually ruinous heap of an edifice of incomparable beauty, the rubbish of which is far more proper to excite our grief for the loss of its primitive grandeur, than to suit our present wants. When these reflections are made, can we find any objections, in the disorders of the world, against the wisdom of our Creator?

Are the miseries of man, and is the fatal necessity of death, in contemplation? With the principles of the gospel, I solve the difficulties, which these sad objects produce in the mind of the disciple of natural religion. If the principles of christianity be admitted, if we allow, that the afflictions of good men are profitable to them, and that, in many cases, prosperity would be fatal to them; if we grant, that the present is a transitory state, and that this momentary life will be succeeded by an immortal state; if we recollect the many similar truths, which the gospel abundantly declares; can we find, in human miseries, and in the necessity of dying, objections against the goodness of the Creator?

Do the prosperities of bad men, and the adversities of the good, confuse our ideas of God? With the principles of the gospel I can remove all the difficulties which these different conditions produce in the mind of the disciple of natural religion. If the principles of the gospel be admitted, if we be persuaded that the tyrant, whose prosperity astonisheth us, fulfils the counsel of God; if ecclesiastical history assure us, that Herods and Pilates themselves contributed to the establishment of that very christianity which they meant to destroy; especially if we admit a state of future rewards and punishments; can the obscurity in which providence hath been pleased to wrap up some of its designs, raise doubts about the justice of the Creator?

In regard, then, to the first object of contemplation, the perfection of the nature of God, revealed religion is infinitely superior to natural religion; the disciple of the first religion is infinitely wiser than the pupil of the last.

II. Let us consider these two disciples examining *the nature of man*, and endeavouring to know themselves. The

disciple of natural religion cannot know mankind: he cannot perfectly understand the nature, the obligations, the duration of man.

1. The disciple of natural religion can only imperfectly know the *nature* of man, the difference of the two substances of which he is composed. His reason, indeed, may speculate the matter, and he may perceive that there is no relation between motion and thought, between the dissolution of a few fibres and violent sensations of pain, between an agitation of humours and profound reflections; he may infer from two different effects, that there ought to be two different causes; a cause of motion, and a cause of sensation, a cause of agitating humours, and a cause of reflecting, that there is a body, and that there is a spirit.

But in my opinion, those philosophers, who are best acquainted with the nature of man, cannot account for two difficulties that are proposed to them, when, on the mere principles of reason they affirm, that man is composed of the two substances of matter and mind. I ask, first, Do you so well understand matter, are your ideas of it so complete, that you can affirm, for certain, it is capable of nothing more than this, or that? Are you sure it implies a contradiction to affirm, it hath one property which hath escaped your observation? And consequently, can you actually demonstrate, that the essence of matter is incompatible with thought? Since, when you cannot discover the union of an attribute with a subject, you instantly conclude, that two attributes, which seem to you to have no relation, suppose two different subjects; and since you conclude, that extent and thought compose two different subjects, body and soul, because you can discover no natural relation between extent and thought, if I discover a third attribute, which appears to me entirely unconnected with both extent and thought, I shall have a right, in my turn, to admit three subjects in man; matter, which is the subject of extent, mind, which is the subject of thought, and a third subject, which belongs to the attribute, that seems to me to have no relation to either matter or mind. Now I do know such an attribute: but I do not know to which of your two subjects I ought to refer it: I mean sensation. I find it in my nature, and I experience it every hour. But I am altogether at a loss, whether I ought to attribute it to body, or to spirit. I perceive no more natural and necessary relation between sensation and motion, than between sensation and thought. There are, then, on

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your principle, three substances in man, one the substratum, which is the subject of extension; another, which is the subject of thought; and a third, which is the subject of sensation: or rather, I suspect, there is only one substance in man, which is known to me very imperfectly, to which all these attributes belong, and which are united together, although I am not able to discover their relation.

Revealed religion removes these difficulties, and decides the question. It tells us, that there are two beings in man, and if I may express myself so, two different men, the material man, and the immaterial man. The scripture speak on these principles, thus: *The dust shall return to the earth as it was*, this is the material man: *The spirit shall return to God who gave it*, Eccl. xii. 7, this is the immaterial man. *Fear not them which kill the body*, that is to say, the material man: *fear him* which is *able to destroy the soul*, Matt. x. 28. that is, the immaterial man. *We are willing to be absent from the body*, that is, from the material man: *and to be present with the Lord*, 2 Cor. v. 8. that is to say, to have the immaterial man disembodied. *They stoned Stephen*, that is, the material man: *calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit*, Acts vii. 59. that is to say, receive the immaterial man.

2. The disciple of natural religion can obtain only an imperfect knowledge of the *obligations* or *duties* of man. Natural religion may indeed conduct him to a certain point, and tell him, that he ought to love his benefactor, and various similar maxims. But is natural religion, think you, sufficient to account for that contrariety, of which every man is conscious, that opposition between inclination and obligation? A very solid argument, I grant, in favour of moral rectitude ariseth from observing, that to whatever degree a man may carry his sin, whatever efforts he may make to eradicate those seeds of virtue from his heart, which nature hath sown there, he cannot forbear venerating virtue, and recoiling at vice. This is certainly a proof, that the Author of our being meant to forbid vice, and to enjoin virtue. But is there no room for complaint? Is there nothing specious in the following objection?—As in spite of all my endeavours to destroy virtuous dispositions, I cannot help respecting virtue, you infer, that the Author of my being intended I should be virtuous: So, as in spite of all my endeavours to eradicate vice, I cannot help loving vice, have I not reason for inferring, in my turn, that the Author of my being designed I should be vicious; or at least that he

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cannot justly impute guilt to me for performing those actions which proceed from some principles, that were born with me? Is there no shew of reason in this famous sophism?—Reconcile the God of nature with the God of religion. Explain how the God of religion can forbid what the God of nature inspires; and how he who follows those dictates, which the God of nature inspires, can be punished for so doing by the God of religion.

The gospel unfolds this mystery. It attributes this seed of corruption to the depravity of nature. It attributeth the respect we feel for virtue to the remains of the image of God, in which we were formed, and which can never be entirely effaced. Because we were born in sin, the gospel concludes that we ought to apply all our attentive endeavours to eradicate the seeds of corruption. And because the image of the Creator is partly erased from our hearts, the gospel concludes, that we ought to give ourselves wholly to the retracing of it, and so to answer the excellence of our extraction.

3. A disciple of natural religion can obtain only an imperfect knowledge of the *duration* of man, whether his soul be immortal, or whether it be involved in the ruin of matter. Reason, I allow, advanceth some solid arguments in proof of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. For what necessity is there for supposing, that the soul, which is a spiritual, invisible, and immaterial being, that constitutes a whole, and is a distinct being, although united to a portion of matter, should cease to exist, when its union with the body is dissolved? A positive act of the Creator is necessary to the annihilation of a substance. The annihilating of a being that subsists, requireth an act of power similar to that which gave it existence at first. Now, far from having any ground to believe, that God will cause his power to intervene to annihilate our souls, every thing that we know, persuadeth us that he himself hath engraven characters of immortality on them, and that he will preserve them for ever. Enter into thy heart, frail creature! see, feel, consider those grand ideas, those immortal designs, that thirst for existing, which a thousand ages cannot quench; and in these lines and points behold the finger of thy Creator writing a promise of immortality to thee. But how solid soever these arguments may be, however evident in themselves, and striking to a philosopher, they are objectionable, because they are not popular, but above vulgar minds, to whom the bare terms, spirituality and existence, are entirely barbarous, and convey no meaning at all.

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Moreover, the union between the operations of the soul, and those of the body, is so close, that all the philosophers in the world cannot certainly determine, whether the operations of the body ceasing, the operations of the soul do not cease with them. I see a body in perfect health, the mind, therefore, is sound. The same body is disordered, and the mind is disconcerted with it. The brain is filled, and the soul is instantly confused. The brisker the circulation of the blood is, the quicker the ideas of the mind are, and the more extensive its knowledge. At length death comes, and dissolves all the parts of the body; and how difficult is it to persuade one's-self, that the soul, which was affected with every former motion of the body, will not be dissipated by its entire dissolution!

Are they the vulgar only, to whom philosophical arguments for the immortality of the soul appear deficient in evidence? Do not superior geniusses require, at least, an explanation of what rank you assign to beasts, on the principle, that nothing capable of ideas and conceptions can be involved in a dissolution of matter? Nobody would venture to affirm now, in an assembly of philosophers, what was some time ago maintained with great warmth, that beasts are mere self-moving machines. Experience seems to demonstrate the falsity of the metaphysical reasonings, which have been proposed in favour of this opinion; and we cannot observe the actions of beasts without being inclined to infer one of these two consequences: either the spirit of man is mortal, like his body: or the souls of beasts are immortal, like those of mankind.

Revelation dissipates all our obscurities, and teacheth us clearly, and without a may-be, that God willeth our immortality. It carries our thoughts forward to a future state, as to a fixed period, whether the greatest part of the promises of God tend. It commandeth us, indeed, to consider all the blessings of this life, the aliments that nourish us, the rays which enlighten us, the air we breathe, sceptres, crowns, and kingdoms, as effects of the liberality of God, and as grounds of our gratitude. But at the same time, it requireth us to surmount the most magnificent earthly objects. It commandeth us to consider light, air, and aliments, crowns, sceptres, and kingdoms, as unfit to constitute the felicity of a soul created in the image of the *blessed God*, 1 Tim. i. 11. and with whom the *blessed God* hath formed a close and intimate union. It assureth us, that an

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age of life cannot fill the wish of duration, which it is the noble prerogative of an immortal soul to form. It doth not ground the doctrine of immortality on metaphysical speculations, nor on complex arguments, uninvestigable by the greatest part of mankind, and which always leave some doubts in the minds of the ablest philosophers. The gospel grounds the doctrine on the only principle that can support the weight, with which it is encumbered. The principle, which I mean, is the will of the Creator, who having created our souls at first by an act of his will, can either eternally preserve them, or absolutely annihilate them, whether they be material, or spiritual, mortal or immortal, by nature. Thus the disciple of revealed religion doth not float between doubt and assurance, hope and fear, as the disciple of nature doth. He is not obliged to leave the most interesting question that poor mortals can agitate, undecided; whether their souls perish with their bodies, or survive their ruins. He does not say, as Cyrus said to his children: "I know not how to persuade myself, that the soul lives in this mortal body, and ceaseth to be, when the body expires: I am more inclined to think, that it acquires after death more penetration and purity *." He doth not say, as Socrates said to his judges; "And now we are going, I to suffer death, and you to enjoy life. God only knows which is best†." He doth not say as Cicero said, speaking on this important article; "I do not pretend to say, that what I affirm is as infallible as the Pythian oracle, I speak only by conjecture‡." The disciple of revelation, authorized by the testimony of Jesus Christ, who *hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*, 2 Tim. i. 10. boldly affirms, *Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. We, that are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that, which I have committed unto him, against that day*, 2 Cor. iv. 16. v. 4. and 2 Tim. i. 12.

III. We are next to consider the disciple of natural religion, and the disciple of revealed religion, *at the tribunal of*

* Xenophon. Cyrop. † Platon. Apol. Socrat. ad fin.

‡ Ciceron. Tusc. Quæst. lib. I.

of God as penitents soliciting for pardon. The former cannot find, even by *feeling after it*, in natural religion, according to the language of St. Paul, Acts xvii. 27. the grand mean of reconciliation, which God hath given to the church; I mean the sacrifice of the cross. Reason, indeed, discovers, that man is guilty, as the confessions, and acknowledgements, which the heathens made of their crimes, prove. It discerns, that a sinner deserves punishment, as the remorse and fear, with which their consciences were often excruciated, demonstrate. It presumes, indeed, that God will yield to the intreaties of his creatures, as their prayers, and temples, and altars testify. It even goes so far as to perceive the necessity of satisfying divine justice, this their sacrifices, this their burnt-offerings, this their human victims, this the rivers of blood that flowed on their altars, shew.

But, how likely soever all these speculations may be, they form only a systematic body without a head; for no positive promise of pardon from God himself belongs to them. The mystery of the cross is entirely invisible; for only God could reveal that, because he only could plan, and only he could execute that profound relief. How could human reason, alone, and unassisted, have discovered the mystery of redemption, when, alas! after an infallible God hath revealed it, reason is absorbed in its depth, and needs all its submission to receive it as an article of faith?

But that, which natural religion cannot attain, revealed religion clearly discovers. Revelation exhibits a God-man, dying for the sins of mankind, and setting grace before every penitent sinner: grace for all mankind. The schools have often agitated the questions, and sometimes very indiscreetly, Whether Jesus Christ died for all mankind, or only for a small number? Whether his blood were shed for all, who hear the gospel, or for those only, who believe it? We will not dispute these points now: but we will venture to affirm, that there is not an individual of all our hearers, who hath not a right to say to himself; If I believe, I shall be saved; I shall believe, if I endeavour to believe. Consequently, every individual hath a right to apply the benefits of the death of Christ to himself. The gospel reveals grace, which pardons the most atrocious crimes, those that have the most fatal influences. Although you have denied Christ with Peter, betrayed him with Judas, persecuted him with Saul; yet the blood of a God-man is sufficient to obtain your pardon, if you be in the covenant of redemption:

Grace, which is accessible at all times, at every instant of life. Woe be to you, my brethren; Woe be to you, if, abusing this reflection, you delay your return to God till the last moments of your lives, when your repentance will be difficult, not to say impracticable and impossible! But, it is always certain, that God every instant opens the treasures of his mercy, when sinners return to him by sincere repentance. Grace, capable of terminating all the melancholy thoughts, that are produced by the fear of being abandoned by God in the midst of our race, and of having the work of salvation left imperfect; for, after he hath given us a present so magnificent, what can he refuse? *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. Grace, so clearly revealed in our scriptures, that the most accurate reasoning, heresy the most extravagant, and infidelity the most obstinate, cannot enervate its declarations; for, the death of Christ may be considered in different views: it is a sufficient confirmation of his doctrine; it is a perfect patron of patience; it is the most magnanimous degree of extraordinary excellencies that can be imagined: but the gospel very seldom presents it to us in any of these views, it leaves them to our own perception; but when it speaks of his death, it usually speaks of it as an expiatory sacrifice. Need we repeat here a number of formal texts, and express decisions on this matter? Thanks be to God, we are preaching to a christian auditory, who make the death of the Redeemer the foundation of faith! The gospel, then, assureth the penitent sinner of pardon. Zeno, Epicurus, Pythagoras, Socrates, Porch, Academy, Lycæum, what have you to offer to your disciples equal to this promise of the gospel?

IV. But that, which principally displays the prerogatives of the christian above those of the philosopher, is *an all-sufficient provision againt the fear of death.* A comparison between a dying pagan and a dying christian will shew this. I consider a pagan, in his dying-bed, speaking to himself what follows. "On which side soever I consider my state, I perceive nothing but trouble and despair. If I observe the forerunners of death, I see awful symptoms, violent sickness and intolerable pain, which surround my sick-bed, and are the first scenes of the bloody tragedy. As to the world, my dearest objects disappear; my closest connections are dissolving; my most specious titles are effacing;

facing; my noblest privileges are vanishing away; a dismal curtain falls between my eyes and all the decorations of the universe. In regard to my body, it is a mass without motion and life; my tongue is about to be condemned to eternal silence; my eyes to perpetual darkness; all the organs of my body to entire dissolution; and the miserable remains of my carcase to lodge in the grave, and to become food for the worms. If I consider my soul, I scarcely know whether it be immortal; and could I demonstrate its natural immortality, I should not be able to say, whether my Creator would display his attributes in preserving, or in destroying it; whether my wishes for immortality be the dictates of nature, or the language of sin. If I consider my past life, I have a witness within me, attesting that my practice hath been less than my knowledge, how small soever the latter hath been; and that the abundant depravity of my heart hath thickened the darkness of my mind. If I consider futurity, I think, I discover through many thick clouds a future state; my reason suggests, that the Author of nature hath not given me a soul so sublime in thought, and so expansive in desire, merely to move in this little orb for a moment: But this is nothing but conjecture; and, if there be another œconomy after this, should I be less miserable than I am here? One moment I hope for annihilation, the next I shudder with the fear of being annihilated; my thoughts and desires are at war with each other, they rise, they resist, they destroy one another." Such is the dying heathen. If a few examples of those, who have died otherwise, be adduced, they ought not to be urged in evidence against what we have advanced; for they are rare, and very probably deceptive, their outward tranquillity being only a concealment of trouble within. Trouble is the greater for confinement within, and for an affected appearance without. As we ought not to believe, that philosophy hath rendered men insensible of pain, because some philosophers have maintained, that pain is no evil, and have seemed to triumph over it: so neither ought we to believe, that it hath disarmed death in regard to the disciples of natural religion, because some have affirmed, that death is not an object of fear. After all, if some pagans enjoyed a real tranquillity at death, it was a groundless tranquillity, to which reason contributed nothing at all.

O! how differently do christians die! How doth revealed religion triumph over the religion of nature in this respect! May each of our hearers be a new evidence of this

article! The whole, that troubles an expiring heathen, revives a christian in his dying bed.

Thus speaks the dying christian. "When I consider the awful symptoms of death, and the violent agonies of dissolving nature, they appear to me as medical preparations, sharp, but salutary; they are necessary to detach me from life, and to separate the remains of inward depravity from me. Beside, I shall not be abandoned to my own frailty: but my patience and constancy will be proportional to my sufferings, and that powerful arm, which hath supported me through life, will uphold me under the pressure of death. If I consider my sins, many as they are, I am invulnerable; for I go to a tribunal of mercy, where God is reconciled, and justice is satisfied. If I consider my body, I perceive, I am putting off a mean and corruptible habit, and putting on robes of glory. Fall, fall ye imperfect senses, ye frail organs, fall house of clay into your original dust; you will be *sown in corruption*, but *raised in incorruption*; *sown in dishonour*, but *raised in glory*; *sown in weakness*, but *raised in power*, 1 Cor. xv. 42. If I consider my soul, it is passing, I see, from slavery to freedom. I shall carry with me that, which thinks and reflects. I shall carry with me the delicacy of taste, the harmony of sounds, the beauty of colours, the fragrance of odoriferous smells. I shall surmount heaven and earth, nature and all terrestrial things, and my ideas of all their beauties will multiply and expand. If I consider the future œconomy, to which I go, I have, I own, very inadequate notions of it; but my incapacity is the ground of my expectation. Could I perfectly comprehend it, it would argue its resemblance to some of the present objects of my senses, or its minute proportion to the present operations of my mind. If worldly dignities and grandeurs, if accumulated treasures, if the enjoyments of the most refined voluptuousness, were to represent to me celestial felicity, I should suppose, that, partaking of their nature, they partook of their vanity. But, if nothing here can represent the future state, it is because that state surpasseth every other. My ardor is increased by my imperfect knowledge of it. My knowledge and virtue, I am certain, will be perfected; I know, I shall comprehend truth, and obey order; I know, I shall be free from all evils, and in possession of all good; I shall be present with God, I know, and with all the happy spirits, who surround his throne;

and

and this perfect state, I am sure, will continue for ever and ever."

Such are the all-sufficient supports, which revealed religion affords against the fear of death. Such are the meditations of a dying christian; not of one, whose whole christianity consists of dry speculations, which have no influence over his practice; but of one, who applies his knowledge to relieve the real wants of his life.

Christianity, then, we have seen, is superior to natural religion, in these four respects. To these we will add a few more reflections in further evidence of the superiority of revealed religion to the religion of nature.

1. *The ideas of the ancient philosophers concerning natural religion were not collected into a body of doctrine.* One philosopher had one idea, another studious man had another idea; ideas of truth and virtue, therefore, lay dispersed. Who doth not see the pre-eminence of revelation, on this article? No human capacity either hath been, or would ever have been equalled to the noble conception of a perfect body of truth. There is no genius so narrow as not to be capable of proposing some clear truth, some excellent maxim: But to lay down principles, and to perceive at one a chain of consequences, these are the efforts of great geniusses; this capability is philosophical perfection. If this axiom be incontestible, what a fountain of wisdom does the system of christianity argue? It presents us, in one lovely body of perfect symmetry, all the ideas we have enumerated. One idea supposeth another idea; and the whole is united in a manner so compact, that it is impossible to alter one particle without defacing the beauty of all.

2. *Pagan philosophers never had a system of natural religion comparable with that of modern philosophers,* although the latter glory in their contempt of revelation. Modern philosophers have derived the clearest and best parts of their systems from the very revelation, which they affect to despise. We grant, the doctrines of the perfections of God, of providence, and of a future state, are perfectly conformable to the light of reason. A man, who should pursue rational tracks of knowledge to his utmost power, would discover, we own, all these doctrines: But it is one thing to grant, that these doctrines are conformable to reason; and it is another to affirm, that reason actually discovered them. It is one thing to allow, that a man, who should pursue rational tracks of knowledge to his utmost power, would discover

cover all these doctrines; and it is another to pretend, that any man hath pursued these tracks to the utmost, and hath actually discovered them. It was the gospel, that taught mankind the use of their reason. It was the gospel, that assisted men to form a body of natural religion. Modern philosophers avail themselves of these aids; they form a body of natural religion by the light of the gospel, and then they attribute to their own penetration what they derive from foreign aid.

3. *What was most rational in the natural religion of the Pagan philosophers was mixed with fancies and dreams.* There was not a single philosopher, who did not adopt some absurdity, and communicate it to his disciples. One taught, that every being was animated with a particular soul, and on this absurd hypothesis he pretended to account for all the phœnomena of nature. Another took every star for a god, and thought the soul a vapour, that passed from one body to another, expiating in the body of a beast the sins that were committed in that of a man. One attributed the creation of the world to a blind chance, and the government of all events in it to an inviolable fate. Another affirmed the eternity of the world, and said, there was no period in eternity, in which heaven and earth, nature and elements, were not visible. One said, Every thing is uncertain; we are not sure of our own existence; the distinction between just and unjust, virtue and vice, is fanciful, and hath no real foundation in the nature of things. Another made matter equal to God; and maintained, that it concurred with the Supreme Being in the formation of the universe. One took the world for a prodigious body, of which, he thought, God was the soul. Another affirmed the materiality of the soul, and attributed to matter the faculties of thinking and reasoning. Some denied the immortality of the soul, and the intervention of Providence; and pretended, that an infinite number of particles of matter, indivisible, and indestructible, revolved in the universe; that from their fortuitous concourse arose the present world; that in all this there was no design; that the feet were not formed for walking, the eyes for seeing, nor the hands for handling. The gospel is light without darkness. It hath nothing mean; nothing false; nothing that doth not bear the characters of that wisdom, from which it proceeds.

4. *What was pure in the natural religion of the heathens was not known, nor could be known to any but philosophers.*

sophers. The common people were incapable of that penetration and labour, which the investigating of truth, and the distinguishing of it from that falshood, in which passion and prejudice had enveloped it, required. A mediocrity of genius, I allow, is sufficient for the purpose of inferring a part of those consequences from the works of nature, of which we form the body of natural religion: But none, but geniusses of the first order, are capable of kenning those distant consequences, which are infolded in darkness. The bulk of mankind wanted a short way proportional to every mind. They wanted an authority, the infallibility of which all mankind might easily see. They wanted a revelation founded on evidence plain and obvious to all the world. Philosophers could not shew the world such a short way: but revelation hath shewn it. No philosopher could assume the authority necessary to establish such a way: it became God alone to dictate in such a manner, and in revelation he hath done it.

Here we would finish this discourse; but, as the subject is liable to abuse, we think it necessary to guard you against two common abuses: and as the doctrine is reducible to practice, we will add two general reflections on the whole to direct your conduct.

1. *Some, who acknowledge the superior excellence of revealed religion to the religion of nature, cast an odious contempt on the pains that are taken to cultivate reason, and to improve the mind.* They think, the way to obtain a sound system of divinity is to neglect an exact method of reasoning; with them to be a bad philosopher is the ready way to become a good christian; and to cultivate reason is to render the design of religion abortive. Nothing can be more foreign from the intention of St. Paul, and the design of this discourse, than such an absurd consequence. Nothing would so effectually depreciate the gospel, and betray the cause into the hands of atheists and infidels. On the contrary, an exact habit of reasoning is essential to a sound system of divinity; reason must be cultivated, if we would understand the excellent characters of religion; the better philosopher, the more disposed to become a good christian. Do not deceive yourselves, my brethren; without rational knowledge, and accurate judgment, the full evidence of the arguments, that establish the doctrine of the existence of God can never be perceived; at least, the doctrine can never be properly defended. Without the exercise of reason, and accuracy

curacy of judgment, we can never perceive clearly the evidence of the proofs, on which we ground the divinity of revelation, and the authenticity of the books that contain it; at least, we can never answer all the objections, which libertinism opposeth against this important subject. Without rational and accurate knowledge the true meaning of revelation can never be understood. Without exercising reason, and accuracy of judgment, we can not distinguish which of all the various sects of christianity, hath taken the law of Jesus Christ for its rule, his oracles for its guide, his decisions for infallible decrees; at, least, we shall find it extremely difficult to escape those dangers, which heresy will throw across our path, at every step: and to avoid those lurking holes, in which the most absurd sectaries lodge. Without the aid of reason, and accuracy of thought, we cannot understand the pre-eminence of christianity over natural religion. The more a man cultivates his reason, the more he feels the imperfection of his reason. The more accuracy of judgment a man acquires, the more fully will he perceive his need of a supernatural revelation to supply the defect of his discoveries, and to render his knowledge complete.

2. *The pre-eminence of revelation inspires some with a cruel divinity*, who persuade themselves, that all, who, they think, have not been favoured with revelation, are excluded from salvation, and doomed to everlasting flames. The famous question of the destiny of those, who seem to us not to have known any thing but natural religion, we ought carefully to divide into two questions; a question of fact; and a question of right. The question of right is, whether a heathen, considered as a heathen, and on supposition of his having no other knowledge than that of nature, could be saved? The question of fact is, whether God, through the same mercy, which inclined him to reveal himself to us in the clearest manner, did not give to some of the heathens a knowledge superior to that of natural religion?

What we have already heard is sufficient to determine the question of right: for, if the notion we have given of natural religion be just, it is sufficient to prove, that it is incapable of conducting mankind to salvation. *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*, John xvii. 3. *There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*, Acts iv. 13. The disciples of natural religion *had no hope*, and were *without God in the world*, Eph. ii. 12.

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tudinarian theology in vain opposeth these decisions by alleging some passages of scripture, which seem to favour the opposite opinion. In vain is it urged, that *God never left himself without witness, in doing* the heathens *good*; for it is one thing to receive of God *rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons*, Acts xiv. 17. (and the apostle speaks of these blessings only,) and it is another thing to participate an illuminating faith, a sanctifying spirit, a saving hope. In vain is that quoted, which our apostle said in his discourse in the Areopagus, that *God hath determined, that the heathens should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him*, chap. xvii. 27. For it is one thing to find God, as him, who *giveth life, and breath to all* mankind; as him, who *hath made of one blood all nations of men:* as him, in whom *we live and move, and have our being*, as him, whom *gold, or silver, or stone* cannot represent, ver. 25. 28. 29: and another thing to find him, as a propitious parent; opening the treasures of his mercy, and bestowing on us his Son. It is to no purpose to allege that the heathens are said to have been *without excuse*: for it is one thing to be inexcusable for *changing the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things*, Rom. i. 20. for giving themselves up to those excesses, which the holiness of this place forbids me to name, and which the apostle depicts in the most odious colours; and it is another thing to be inexcusable for rejecting an œconomy, that reveals every thing necessary to salvation. There is no difficulty, then, in the question of right. The disciple of natural religion, considered as such, could not be saved. Natural religion was insufficient to conduct men to salvation.

But the question of fact, (whether God gave any pagan knowledge superior to that of natural religion?) ought to be treated with the utmost caution.

We will not say, with some divines, that the heathens were saved by *an implicit faith* in Jesus Christ. By implicit faith, they mean, a disposition in a wise heathen to have believed in Jesus Christ, had Jesus Christ been revealed to him. We will not affirm, with Clement of Alexandria, that philosophy was that to the Greeks, which the law was to the Jews, a *schoolmaster, to bring men unto Christ**, Gal. iii. 24.

* Strom. lib. i. p. 282. Edit. Par. vi. 499.

We will not affirm, with St. Chrisostom, that they, who, despising idolatry, adored the Creator before the coming of Christ, were saved without faith*. We will not, like one of our reformers, in a letter to Francis I. king of France, place Theseus, Hercules, Numa, Aristides, Cato, and the ancestors of the king, with the patriarchs, the virgin Mary, and the apostles; acting less in the character of a minister, whose office it is to *declare all the counsel of God*, Acts xx. 27. than in that of an author, whose aim it is to flatter the vanity of man†. Less still, do we think, we have a right to say, with St. Augustine, that the Erythrean Sybil is in heaven‡. Some, who now quote St. Chrysostom, St. Clement, and St. Augustine, with great veneration, would anathematize any cotemporary, who should advance the same propositions, which these fathers advanced. But, after all, who dare *limit the Holy one of Israel?* Psal. lxxviii. 41. Who dare affirm, that God could not reveal himself to a heathen on his death-bed? Who will venture to say, he hath never done so? Let us renounce our inclination to damn mankind. Let us reject that theology, which derives its glory from its cruelty. Let us entertain sentiments more charitable than those of some divines, who cannot conceive they shall be happy in heaven, unless they know that thousands are miserable in hell. This is the second abuse, which we wish to prevent.

But, although we ought not to despair of the salvation of those, who were not born under the œconomy of grace, as we are, we ought, however, (and this is the first use of our subject, to which we exhort you,) we ought to value this œconomy very highly, to attach ourselves to it inviolably, and to derive from it all the succour, and all the knowledge, that we cannot procure by our own speculations. Especially, we ought to seek in this œconomy for remedies for the disorders, which sin hath caused in our souls. It is a common distemper in this age to frame arbitrary systems of religion, and to seek divine mercy, where it is not to be found. The wise christian derives his system from the gospel only. Natural reason is a very dangerous guarantee of our destiny. Nothing is more fluctuating and precarious than the salvation of

* Hom. xxvii. St. Math.

† See an epistle of Zuinglius, at the beginning of his exposition of the christian faith.

‡ City of God, lib. xviii. c. 23.

of mankind, if it have no better assurance than a few metaphysical speculations on the goodness of the Supreme Being. Our notions of God, indeed, include love. The productions of nature, and the conduct of Providence, concur, I grant, in assuring us, that God loves to bestow benedictions on his creatures. But the attributes of God are fathomless, boundless oceans, in which we are as often lost, as we have the presumption to attempt to traverse them without a pilot. Nature and Providence are both labyrinths, in which our frail reason is quickly bewildered, and finally entangled. The idea of justice enters no less into a notion of the Supreme Being than that of mercy. And, say what we will, that we are guilty creatures will not admit of a doubt; for conscience itself, our own conscience, pronounceth a sentence of condemnation on us, however prone we may be to flatter and favour ourselves. God condescends to terminate the doubts, which these various speculations produce in our minds. In his word of revelation he assures us, that he is merciful; and he informs us on what we may found our hopes of sharing his mercy, on the covenant he hath made with us in the gospel. Wo be to us, if by criminally refusing to *bring every thought to the obedience of Christ*, 2 Cor. x. 5. we forsake these *fountains of living waters*, which he openeth to us in religion, and persist in *hewing out broken cisterns* of speculations and systems! Jer. ii. 13. The sacred books, which are in our hands, and which contain the substance of the sermons of inspired men, shew us these *fountains of living waters*. They attest in a manner the most clear, and level to the smallest attention of the lowest capacity, that Jesus Christ alone hath reconciled us to God; that *God hath set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood*; that *God called him* to be *an high priest* that he might *become the author of eternal salvation unto all them that come unto God by him*, Rom. iii. 25. Heb. v. 9, 10. and chap. vii. 25. Let us go, then, unto God *by him*, and by him only: And, let me repeat it again, Wo be to us, if we determine to go to God by our own speculations, and systems.

But the principal use we ought to make of the text and of this sermon is truly and thoroughly to acknowledge that superiority of virtue and holiness, to which the superiority of revealed religion engageth us. A mortifying, but a salutary reflection! What account can we give of the light, that shines in the gospel with so much splendour, and which distinguisheth us from the heathens, whose blindness we de-

plore? When we place the two œconomies opposite to each other, and contemplate both, a crowd of reflections arise, and our prerogatives present themselves from every part. The clearest light shines around us. Light into the attributes of God; light into the nature, the obligations, the duration of man; light into the grand method of reconciliation, which God hath presented to the church; light into the certainty of a future state. But when we oppose disciple to disciple; virtue to virtue; we hardly find any room for comparison. Except here and there an elect soul; here and there one lost in the crowd, can you see any great difference between the christian and the pagan world?

What shame would cover us, were we to contrast Holland with Greece, the cities in these provinces with the city of Corinth; Corinth was the metropolis of Greece. There commerce prospered, and attracted immense riches from all parts of the universe, and along with wealth pride, imperiousness and debauchery, which almost inevitably follow a prosperous trade. Thither went some of the natives of other countries, and carried with them their passions and their vices. There immorality was enthroned. There, according to Strabo*, was a temple dedicated to the immodest Venus. There the palace of dissoluteness was erected, the ruins of which are yet to be seen by travellers; that infamous palace, in which a thousand prostitutes were maintained. There the abominable Lais held her court, and exacted six talents of every one, who fell a prey to her deceptions. There impurity was become so notorious, that a *Corinthian* was synonymous to a *prostitute;* and the proverb *to live like a Corinthian*, was as much as to say *to live a life of debauchery*†. Ye provinces! in which we dwell. Ye cities! in which we preach. O Lais! Lais! who attendest our sermons so often . . . . . I spare you. But how could we run the parallel between Holland and Greece, between these cities and that of Corinth?

Moreover, were we to compare success with success, the docility of our disciples with the docility of those disciples, to whom the pagan philosophers, who lived in those days of darkness, preached; how much to our disadvantage would the comparison be? Pythagoras would say, When I taught philosophy

* Geog. lib. viii. pag. 378. Edit. Par. 1620.
† Erasm. Adag. Cent. 7. pag. 633. 720.

losophy at Crotona, I persuaded the lascivious to renounce luxury, the drunkard to abstain from wine, and even the most gay ladies to sacrifice their rich and fashionable garments to modesty *. When I was in Italy, I re-established liberty and civil government, and by one discourse reclaimed two thousand men; I prevailed with them to subdue the suggestions of avarice, and the emotions of pride, and to love meditation, retirement, and silence. I did more with my philosophy, than you do with that morality, of which you make such a magnificent display. Hegasias would say, I threw all Greece into an uproar; what I said on the vanity of life, on the insipid nature of its pleasures, the vanity of its promises, the bitterness of its calamities, had an effect so great, that some destroyed themselves, others would have followed their example, and I should have depopulated whole cities, had not Ptolomy silenced me †. My discourses detached men from the world, more effectually than yours, although you preach the doctrines of a future life, of paradise, and of eternity. Zeno would tell us, I influenced my disciples to contemn pain, to despise a tyrant, and to trample on punishment. I did more towards elevating man above humanity with that philosophy, of which you have such unfavourable ideas, than you do with that religion, on which you bestow such fine encomiums.

What then! Shall the advantages, which advance the christian revelation above the speculations of the pagan world, advance at the same time the virtues of the pagans above those of christians! And shall all the ways of salvation, which are opened to us in the communion of Jesus Christ, serve only to render salvation inaccessible to us! God forbid! Let us assimulate our religion to the œconomy, under which we live. May knowledge conduct us to virtue, and virtue to felicity and glory! God grant us this grace! To him be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

* Diog. Laert. lib. iii. in Pythag. pag. 114. Edit. Rom. fol. 1594.

† Cic. Qu. Tusc. lib. i. Diog. Laert. in Aristip. lib. ii.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

THE SUPERIOR EVIDENCE AND INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

1 JOHN iv. 4.

Greater is he, that is in you, than he, that is in the world.

THAT appearance, which is recorded in the second book of Kings, chap. vi. 8, &c. was very proper to embolden the timid servant of Elisha. The king of Syria was at war with the king of Israel. The wise counsel of the prophet was more advantageous to his prince than that of his general was. The Syrian thought, if he could render himself master of such an extraordinary man, he could easily subdue the rest of the Israelites. In order to insure success, he surrounded Dothan, the dwelling-place of the prophet, with his troops in the night. The prophet's servant was going out early the next morning with his master, when, on seeing the numerous Syrian forces, he trembled, and exclaimed, *Alas! my master, how shall we do? Fear not,* replied Elisha, *they that be with us, are more than they, that be with them.* To this he added, addressing himself to God in prayer, *Lord, open his eyes, that he may see!* The prayer was heard. The servant of Elisha presently saw the sufficient ground of his master's confidence; he discovered a celestial multitude of *horses, and chariots of fire,* which God had sent to defend his servant from the king of Syria.

How often, my brethren, have you trembled at the sight of that multitude of enemies, which is let loose against you? When you have seen yourselves called *to wrestle,* as St. Paul speaks, *not* only *against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness*

ness in high places; against the sophisms of error, against the tyrants of the church, and, which is still more formidable, against the depravity of your own hearts: how often in these cases have you exclaimed, *Alas! how shall we do? Who is sufficient for these things?* 2 Cor. ii. 16. *Who then can be saved?* Matt. xix. 25.

But take courage, christian wrestlers! *they that be with you, are more than they, that are against you. O Lord! open their eyes, that they may see! May they see the great cloud of witnesses,* Heb. xii. 1. who fought in the same field, to which they are called, and there obtained a victory! *May they see* the blessed *angels* who *encamp round about* them, to protect their persons, and to defeat their foes! *May they see* the powerful aid of that *spirit, which thou hast given* them! *May they see Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith,* Psal. xxxiv. 7. 1 John iii. 24. and Heb. xii. 2. who animates them from heaven, and the eternal rewards, which thou art preparing to crown their perseverance! and may a happy experience teach them that truth, on which we are going to fix their attention, *Greater is he, that is in them, than he, that is in the world.* Amen.

Two preliminary remarks will elucidate our subject.

1. Although the proposition in my text is general, and regards all christians, yet St. John wrote it with a particular view to those persons, to whom he addressed the epistle, from which we have taken it. In order to ascertain this, reflect on the times of the apostles, and remark the accomplishment of that prophecy, which Jesus Christ had some time before delivered. He had foretold, that there would *arise* in Judea *false Christs, and false prophets, who would shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible,) they would deceive the very elect,* Matt. xxiv. 24. This prophecy was to be accomplished immediately before the destruction of Jerusalem; and to that period learned men assign the publication of this epistle St. John calls the time, in which he wrote, *the last time,* chap. ii. 18. that is to say, in the Jewish style, the time in which the metropolis of Judea was to be destroyed: and adds the sign, by which christians might *know, that it was the last time; as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby ye know that it is the last time.* Remark those words, *as ye have heard:*

heard: the apostle meant, by them, to remind his readers of the prophecy of Jesus Christ.

I do not pretend now to inquire what seducers Jesus Christ particularly intended in this prophecy. Simon the sorcerer may be placed in the class of *false Christs.* There is a very remarkable passage to this purpose in the tenth verse of the eighth chapter of Acts. It is there said, that this impostor had so *bewitched the people of Samaria,* that *all, from the least to the greatest, said, This man is the great power of God.* What means this phrase, *the great power of God?* It is the title, which the ancient Jews gave the Messiah. Philo, treating of the divine essence, established the mystery of the Trinity, as clearly as a Jew could establish it, who had no other guide than the old testament. He speaks first of God; then of what he calls the *logos,* the word, (the same term is translated *word* in the first chapter of the gospel of St. John,) and he calls this word *the great power of God,* and distinguisheth him from a third person, whom he denominates *the second power.* Moreover, Origen says, Simon the sorcerer took the title of *Son of God,* a title, which the Jews had appropriated to the Messiah.

As there were *false Christs* in the time of St. John, so there were also *false prophets,* that is, false teachers. These St. John hath characterised in the chapters, which precede my text; and the portraits drawn by the apostle are so exactly like those, which the primitive fathers of the church have exhibited of Ebion and Cerinthus, that it is easy to know them. A particular investigation of this subject would divert our attention too far from our principal design; and it shall suffice at present to observe, that these impostors caused great mischiefs in the church. Simon, the sorcerer, indeed, at first renounced his imposture: but he soon adopted it again. Justin Martyr informs us, that, in his time, there remained some disciples of that wretch, who called him *the first intelligence* of the divinity, that is *the word*; and who named Helen, the associate of Simon in his imposture, *the second intelligence* of the divinity, by which title they intended to describe the holy Ghost. Only they, who are novices in the history of primitive christianity, can be ignorant of the ravages, which Ebion and Cerinthus made in the church.

But Jesus Christ had foretold, and all ages have verified the prediction, that *the gates of hell should not prevail against* the church, Matt. xvi. 18. The most specious so-

phisms of Ebion and Cerinthus, the most seducing deceptions of Simon and his associates, did not draw off one of the elect from Jesus Christ; the faithful followers of the Son of God, notwithstanding their dispersion, triumphed over false Christs, and false teachers. St. John extols their victory in the words of my text; *ye have overcome them*, says he, *because greater is he, that is in you, than he, that is in the world.*

It seems almost needless precisely to point out here whom St. John means by *him, who is in believers*, and by *him, who is in the world*; or to determine which, of the different senses of commentators, seems to us the most defensible. Some say, the apostle intended the holy Spirit by *him who is in you*; others think, he meant Jesus Christ; and others suppose him speaking of the principle of regeneration, which is in christians, and which renders them invulnerable by all the attacks of the world. In like manner, if we endeavour to affix a distinct idea to the other terms, *him, who is in the world;* some pretend that St. John means Satan; others that he expresseth in a vague manner all the means, which the world employs to seduce good men.

But, whatever difference there may appear in these explications, they all come to the same sense. For if the apostle speak of the inhabitation of Jesus Christ, it is certain, he dwells in us by his holy Spirit; and if he mean the holy Spirit, it is certain he dwells in us by the principles of regeneration. In like manner in regard to the other proposition. If it be Satan, *who*, the apostle saith, *is in the world*, he is there undoubtedly by the errors, which his emissaries publish there, and by the vices, which they introduce there. The design of the apostle, therefore, is to shew the superiority of the means, which God employs to save us, to those, which the world employs to destroy us.

2. But this produceth another difficulty, and the solution of it is my second article. It should seem, if the apostle had reason to say of them, who had persevered in christianity, that *he, who was in them, was greater than he, who was in the world*, seducers also had reason to say, that he, who was in those, whom they had seduced, was greater than he, who was in persevering christians. Satan hath still, in our day, more disciples than Jesus Christ; can it be said, that Satan is greater than Jesus Christ? Can it be said, that the means, employed by that lying and murdering spirit to seduce mankind, are superior to those, which the holy Spirit

Spirit employs to illuminate them? No, my brethren; and our answer to these questions, which requires your particular attention, will serve to elucidate one of the most obscure articles of religion. We will endeavour to express the matter clearly to all our attentive hearers.

We must carefully distinguish a mean applied to an irrational agent from a mean applied to an intelligent agent. A mean, that is applied to an irrational agent, can never be accounted superior to the obstacles, which oppose it, unless its superiority be justified by success. A certain degree of power is requisite to move a mass of a certain weight, a degree of power superior to the weight of a certain mass will never fail to move the mass out of its place, and to force it away.

But it is not so with the means, which are applied to intelligent beings; they are not always attended with that success, which, it should seem, ought to follow the application of them. I attempt to prove to a man, on whom nature hath bestowed common sense, that if an equal number be taken from an equal number, an equal number will remain. I propose my demonstration to him with all possible clearness, and he hath no less faculty to comprehend it, than I have to propose it. He persists, however, in the opposite proposition: but his obstinacy is the only cause of his error; he refuseth to believe me, because he refuseth to hear me. Were an attentive and teachable man to yield to my demonstration, while the former persisted in denying it, could it be reasonably said then, that motives of incredulity in the latter were superior to motives of credibility? We must distinguish, then, a mean applied to an intelligent being, from a mean applied to an irrational being.

Further. Among the obstacles, with which intelligent beings resist means applied to them, physical obstacles must be distinguished from moral obstacles. Physical obstacles are such as necessarily belong to the being, that resisteth, so that there is no faculty to remove them. I propose to an infant a conclusion, the understanding of which depends on a chain of propositions, which he is incapable of following. The obstacle, which I find in him, is an obstacle merely physical; he hath not a faculty to remove it.

I propose the same conclusion to a man of mature age; he understands it no more than the infant just now mentioned: but his ignorance doth not proceed from a want of

those faculties, which are necessary to comprehend it, but from his disuse of them. This is a moral obstacle.

It cannot be fairly said, that the power applied to physical resistance is greater than the resistance, unless it necessarily prevail over it: but it is very different with that power, which is applied to moral resistance. Those, who have attended to what hath been said, easily perceive the reason of the difference, without our detaining you in explaining it.

Why do we not use the same fair reasoning on religious subjects, which we profess to use on all other subjects? Doth religion authorise us to place that to the account of God, which proceedeth solely from the free obstinacy, and voluntary malice of mankind? Jesus Christ did not descend to this world to convert irrational beings; but intelligent creatures: he found two sorts of obstacles in the way of their conversion, obstacles merely physical, and obstacles merely moral. Obstacles merely physical are those, which would have prevented our discovering the plan of redemption, if he had not revealed it; and of the same kind are those, which our natural constitution, being disconcerted by sin, opposeth against the end, which our Saviour proposeth, of rendering us holy. Jesus Christ hath surmounted these obstacles by the light of revelation, and by the aid of his holy Spirit.

But he found also other obstacles merely moral. Such were those, which he met with in the pharisees, and which hindered those execrable men from yielding to the power of his miracles. Such are those still of all erroneous and wicked men, whose errors and vices proceed from similar principles. The superiority of the means, which Jesus Christ useth to reclaim them, doth not depend on the success of those means: they fail, it is evident, through the power of those merely moral obstacles, which a voluntary malice, and a free obstinacy oppose against them.

This remark, as I said before, elucidates one of the most obscure articles of christianity. It accounts for the conduct of God towards his creatures, and for the language which his servants use on his behalf. The omnipotence of God is more than sufficient to convince the most obstinate minds, and to change the most obdurate hearts, and yet he declareth, although he hath displayed only some degrees of it, that he hath employed all the means he could to convert the last and to convince the first. *What could have been done more to my vineyard,*

vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard? Isa. v. 3, 4. Acts of omnipotence might *have been done*, in order to have forced it to produce good grapes, and to have annihilated its unhappy fertility in producing *wild grapes*. But no, his vineyard, as he saith, was *the house of Israel*. The house of Israel consisted of intelligent beings, not of irrational beings. God applied to these beings means suitable, not to irrational, but to intelligent beings. He met with two sorts of obstacles to the conversion of these beings: physical obstacles, and moral obstacles; and he opposeth to each sort of these obstacles a superior power: but a power suited to the nature of each. The superiority of that, which he opposed to physical obstacles, nesessarily produced its effect, without which it would not have been a superior, but an inferior power. To moral obstacles he opposed a power suited to moral obstacles; if it did not produce its effect, it was not because it had not in itself superior influence; God was not to be blamed, but they, to whom it was applied.

Our remark is, particularly, a key to our text. The means which God employs to irradiate our minds, and to sanctify our hearts, are superior to those, which the world employs to deceive and to deprave us; if that superiority, which is always influential on believers, be destitute of influence on obstinate sinners, it is no less superior in its own nature. The unsuccessfulness of the means with the last proceedeth solely from their own obstinacy and malice. *What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Ye have overcome them, because greater is he, that is in you, than he, that is in the world.* This, I think, is the substance of the meaning of the apostle.

But, as it is only the general sense, it requires to be particularly developed, and I ought to investigate the subject by justifying three propositions, which are included in it, and which I shall have occasion to apply to the christian religion.

I. Truth hath a light superior to all the glimmerings of falshood.

II. Motives to virtue are stronger than motives to vice.

III. The holy Spirit, who openeth the eyes of a christian to shew him the light of the truth, and who toucheth his heart,

heart, in order to make him feel the power of motives to virtue, is infinitely more powerful that Satan, who seduceth mankind by falshood and vice.

Each of these propositions would require a whole discourse; I intend, however, to explain them all in the remaining part of this: the more brevity I am obliged to observe, the more attention you ought to give.

I. *Truth hath a light superior to all the glimmerings of error.* Some men, I grant, are as tenacious of error, as others are of truth. False religions have disciples, who seem to be as sincerely attached to them, as believers are to the true religion; and if Jesus Christ hath his martyrs, Satan also hath his.

Yet I affirm, that the persuasion of a man, who deceives himself, is never equal to that of a man, who doth not deceive himself. How similar soever that impression may appear, falshood makes on the mind of him, who is seduced by it, to that, which truth makes on the mind of him, who is enlightened by it; there is always this grand difference, the force of truth is irresistible, whereas it is always possible to resist that of error.

The force of a known truth is irresistible. There are, it is granted, some truths, there are even infinite numbers, which lie beyond the stretch of my capacity: and there may also be obstacles, that hinder my knowledge of a truth proportional to the extent of my mind. There may, indeed, be many distractions, which may cause me to lose sight of the proofs, that esteblish a truth; and there may be many passions in me, which may induce me to wish it could not be proved, and which, by urging me to employ the whole capacity of my mind in considering objections against it, leave me no part of my perception to attend to what establisheth it. Yet all these cannot diminish the light, which is essential to truth; none of these can prevent a known truth from carrying away the consent in an invincible manner. As a cloud, that conceals the sun, doth not diminish the splendour, which is essential to that globe of fire; so all the obstacles, which prevent my knowledge of a truth, that lies within the reach of my capacity, cannot prevent my receiving the evidence of it, in spite of myself, as soon as I become attentive to it. It doth not depend on me to believe, that from the addition of two to two there results the number four. It is just the same with the truths of philosophy; the same with the truths of religion, and the same with all the known truths in the world.

world. To speak strictly, the knowledge of a truth, and the belief of a truth, is one and the same operation of the mind. Mental liberty doth not consist in believing, or in not believing a known truth; it consisteth in giving, or in not giving, that attention to a truth, which is requisite in order to obtain the knowledge of it. Merit, and demerit, (allow me these expressions, and take them in a good sense,) merit and demerit do not consist in believing, or in disbelieving, a known truth; for neither of these depend on us: they consist in resisting, or in not resisting, the obstacles, which prevent the knowledge of it. We conclude then, that the force of a known truth is irresistible.

It is not the same with error. How strong soever the prejudices may be, that plead for it, it is always possible to resist it. Never was a man deceived in an invincible manner. There is no error so specious, in regard to which a man, whose mental powers are in a good state, and not depraved by a long habit of precipitation, cannot suspend his judgement.

I do not say, that every man is always capable of unraveling a sophism: but it is one thing not to be able to unravel a sophism, and it is another to be invincibly carried away with its evidence. Nor do I affirm, that a man will always find it easy to suspend his judgement. What there is of the plausible in some errors; our natural abhorrence of labour; the authority of our seducers; the interest of our passions in being seduced; each of these separately, all these together, will render it sometimes extremely difficult to us to suspend our judgments, and will hurry us on to rash conclusions. It belongs to human frailty to prefer an easy faith above a laborious discussion; and we rather choose to believe we have found the truth, than to submit to the trouble of looking for it.

It is certain, however, when we compare what passed in our minds, when we yielded to a truth, with what passed there, when we suffered ourselves to be seduced by an error, we perceive, that in the latter case our acquiescence proceeded from an abuse of our reason; whereas in the former it came from our fair and proper use of it. Truth, then, hath a light superior to the glimmerings of error. There is, therefore, something greater in a man, whom truth irradiates, then there is in a man, whom falshood blinds.

Let us abridge our subject. Let us apply what we have said of truth in general to the truths of religion in particular.

To

To enter the more fully into the design of our text, let us make no difficulty of retiring from it to a certain point, and, leaving Ebion, Cerinthus, and Simon the sorcerer, whom, probably, St. John had in view, let us stop at a famous modern controversy. Let us attend to the contest between a believer of revelation and a sceptic, and we shall see the superior evidence of that principle of truth, which enlighteneth the first, above that principle of error, which blindeth the last. What a superiority hath a believer over a sceptic! What a superiority at the tribunal of authority! at the tribunal of interest! at the tribunal of history! at the tribunal of conscience! at the tribunal of reason! at the tribunal of scepticism itself! From each of these it may be truly pronounced, *Greater is he, that is in you, than he, that is in the world.*

1. The believer is superior at the tribunal of *authority*. The sceptic, objecteth against the believer the examples of some few nations, who, it is said, live without religion; and those of some philosophers, whose pretended atheism hath rendered them famous. The believer replieth to the sceptic, by urgings his well grounded suspicions in regard to those historians, and travellers, who have published such examples, and, opposing authority against authority, in favour of the grand leading principles of religion, he alledgeth the unanimous consent of the whole known world.

2. At the tribunal of *interest*. The sceptic resisteth the believer by arguing the constraint, which religion continually putteth on mankind; the pleasure of pursuing every wish without being terrified with the idea of a formidable witness of our actions, or a future account of our conduct. The believer resisteth the sceptic, by arguing the benefit of society, which would be entirely subverted, if infidels could effect their dreadful design of demolishing those bulwarks, which religion builds. He urgeth the interest of each individual, who, in those periods of life, in which he is disgusted with the world; in those, in which he is exposed to catastrophes of glory and fortune; above all, in the period of death, hath no refuge from despair, if the hopes, that religion affords, be groundless.

3. At the tribunal of *history*. The sceptic objects to the believer the impossibility of obtaining demonstration, properly so called, of distant facts. The believer urgeth on the infidels his own acquiescence in the evidence of events, as ancient as those, the distance of which is objected; and,

turning

turning his own weapons against him, he demonstrates to him, that reasons, still stronger than those, which constrain the sceptic to admit other events, such as number of witnesses, unanimity of historians, sacrifices made to certify the testimony, and a thousand more similar proofs, ought to engage him to believe the facts, on which religion is founded.

4. At the tribunal of *conscience*. The infidel opposeth his own experience to the believer, and boasts of having shaken off the yoke of this tyrant. The believer replies by relating the experiences of the most celebrated sceptics, and, using the infidel himself for a demonstration of the truths, which he pretends to subvert, reproaches him with feeling, in spite of himself, the remorse of that conscience, from which he affects to have freed himself; he proves that it awakes when lightning flashes, when thunders roll in the air, when the messengers of death approach to execute their terrible ministry.

5. At the tribunal of *reason*. The sceptic objects to the believer, that religion demands the sacrifice of reason of its disciples; that it reveals abstruse doctrines, and incomprehensible mysteries; and that it requires all to receive its decisions with an entire submission. The believer opposeth the infidel by arguing the infallibility of the intelligence, who revealed these doctrines to us. He proves to him, that the best use, that can be made of reason, is to renounce it in the sense, in which revelation requireth its renunciation, so that reason never walks a path so safe, nor is ever elevated to a degree of honour so eminent, as when, ceasing to see with its own eyes, it seeth only with the eyes of the infallible God.

6. The believer triumphs over the infidel at the tribunal of *scepticism* itself. One single degree of probability in the system of the believer, in our opinion, disconcerts and confounds the system of the sceptic; at least it ought to imbitter all the fancied sweets of infidelity. What satisfaction can a man of sense find in that boasted independence, which the system of infidelity procures, if there be the least shadow of a probability of its plunging him into endless misery? But this very man, who finds the evidences of religion too weak to induce a man of sense to controul his passions, during the momentary duration of this life, this very man finds the system of infidelity so evident that it engageth him to dare that eternity of misery, which religion denounceth

against the impenitent. What a contrast! The obstinate sceptic falls into a credulity, that would be unpardonable in a child. These fiery globes, that revolve over our heads with so much pomp and glory: these *heavens*, that *declare the glory of God*, Psal. xix. 1. that *firmament*, which *sheweth his handy-work:* these successions of seasons: that symmetry of body: these faculties of mind; the martyrs, who attest the truth of the facts, on which religion is founded: the miracles, that confirms the facts: that harmony, between the prophecies and their accomplishment: and all the other numerous arguments, that establish the doctrine of the existence of God, and of the truth of revelation: all these, he pretends, cannot prove enough to engage him to render homage to a Supreme Being: and the few difficulties, which he objects to us; a few rash conjectures; a system of doubts and uncertainties, seem to him sufficiently conclusive to engage him to brave that adorable Being, and to expose himself to all the miseries, that attend those, who affront him.

We conclude, then, that our first proposition is sufficiently justified. Truth in general, the truths of religion in particular, have a light superior to all the glimmerings of error. *Greater is he, that is in you, than he, that is in the world.*

II. We said, in the second place, *motives to virtue are superior to motives to vice.* This proposition is a necessary consequence of the first. Every motive to vice supposeth an error. Every motive to vice supposeth, that, in some cases, it is more advantageous to a man to abandon himself to vice than to cleave inviolably to virtue: this is a falshood; this is even a falshood of the grossest kind. In what case can a creature promise himself more happiness in rebelling against his Creator, than in submitting to his authority? In what case can we hope for more happines in pleasing Satan than in pleasing God?

What I affirmed of all known truth, that its force is irresistible, I affirm, on the same principle, of all motives to virtue: the most hardened sinners cannot resist them, if they attend to them, nor is there any other way of becoming insensible to them, than that of turning the eyes away from them. Dissipation is the usual cause of our irregularities. The principal, I had almost said, the only secret of Satan, in his abominable plan of human destruction, is to dissipate and to stun mankind; the noise of company, the din of amusements,

amusements, the bustle of business, it does not signify, if it be but a noise, it will aways produce its effect; it will always divide the capacity of the mind, it will prevent him, in whose ears it sounds, from thinking and reflecting, from pursuing an argument, and from attending to the weight of conclusive evidence.

And really, where is the man so blind as to digest the falshoods, which motives to vice imply? Where is the wretch so resolute as to reason in this manner?

" I love to be esteemed; I will therefore devote myself wholly to the acquisition of the esteem of those men, who, like me, will shortly be devoured with worms; whose ashes, like mine, will be shortly confounded with the dust of the earth: but I will not take the least pains to obtain the approbation of those noble intelligences, those sublime geniusses, those angels and seraphims, who incessantly surround the throne of God; I will not give myself a moment's concern about obtaining a share of those praises, which the great God will one day bestow, in rich abundance, before heaven and earth, on them who have been faithful to him.

I love honour; I will therefore apply myself wholly to make the world say of me; That man hath an excellent taste for dress; his table is delicately served; the noble blood of his family was never debased by ignoble alliances; nobody can offend him with impunity; he must always be approached with respect: but I will never give myself any trouble to force them to say of me, That man fears God; he prefers his duty above all other things; he thinks there is more magnanimity in forgiving an affront than in revenging it; to be holy, in his opinion, is better than to be noble in the world's esteem, and so on.

I am very fond of pleasure; I will therefore give myself wholly to the gratification of my senses; to the leading of a voluptuous life; a feast shall be succeeded by an amusement, and an amusement shall conduct to debauchery; this round I intend perpetually to pursue: but I will never stir one step to obtain that *fulness of joy*, which is *at God's right hand*, that *river of pleasures*, with which *they, who put their trust under the shadow of his wings. are abundantly satisfied*, Psal. xvi. 11. and xxxvi. 7, 8.

I hate constraint and trouble; I will therefore divert my attention wholly from all penitential exercises; and particularly from imprisonment, banishment, racks, and stakes: but I will brave the chains of darkness, with their galling

weight; the devils, with their fury; hell, with its flames; I am at a point, I consent to curse eternally the day of my birth; eternally to consider annihilation as an invaluable good; to seek death for ever without finding it; for ever to blaspheme my Creator; eternally to hear the howlings of the damned; to howl eternally with them; like them, to be for ever and ever the object of that condemning sentence, *Depart from me, ye cursed! into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*, Matt. xxv. 41. I ask again, Where is the wretch hardened enough to digest these propositions? Yet these are the motives to vice. Is not the developing of these sufficient to discover, that they ought to yield to virtue, and to prove in our second sense, that *Greater is he that is in us, than he, that is in the world?*

But, how active soever the light of religion may be, prejudices often cover its brightness from us; how superior soever motives to virtue may be to motives to vice, our passions invigorate motives to vice, and enervate those to virtue. Were we even free from innate dispositions to sin, we should be hurried into it by an external enemy, who studies our inclinations, adapts himself to our taste, avails himself of our frailties, manages circumstances, and who, according to the expression of an apostle, *walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. This enemy is Satan.

III. But the holy Spirit, who openeth our eyes, (and this is my third proposition,) the holy Spirit, who openeth our eyes to shew us the light of truth, and who toucheth our hearts to make us feel the force of virtuous motives, is infinitely more powerful than Satan.

I do not pretend to agitate here the indissoluble question concerning the power of the devil over sublunary beings, and particularly over man: what I should advance on this subject would not be very agreeable to my hearers. We are naturally inclined to attribute too much to the devil, and we easily persuade ourselves, that we are in an enchanted world. It seems to us, that as many degrees of power as we add to those, which God hath given the tempter, so many apologies we acquire for our frailties, and that the more power the enemy hath, with whom we are at war, the more excuseable we are for suffering ourselves to be conquered, and for yielding to superior force. Do we revolve any black design in our minds? It is the devil, who inspires us with it. Do we lay a train for executing any criminal intrigues?

intrigues? It is the devil, who invented it. Do we forget our prayers, our promises, our protestations? It is the devil, who effaced them from our memory. My brethren, do you know, who is the most terrible tempter? Our own cupidity. Do you know, what devil is the most formidable? It is self.

But, passing reflections of this kind, and taking, in its plain and obvious meaning, a truth, which the holy scriptures in a great many places attest, that is, that the devil continually endeavours to destroy mankind; I repeat my third proposition, The holy Spirit, who watcheth to save us, is infinitely more powerful than the devil, who seeks to destroy us.

The power of Satan is a *borrowed* power. This mischievous spirit cannot move without the permission of God; yea, he is only a minister of his will. This appears in the history of Job. Jealous of the prosperity, more still of the virtue of that holy man, he thought, he could corrupt his virtue by touching his prosperity. But he could not execute one of his designs, further than God, by loosening his rein, allowed him to execute it. The power of the Spirit of God is a power proper and essential to him, who exerciseth it.

Because the power of the devil is a borrowed power, it is a *limited* power, and although we are incapable of determining its bounds, yet, we may reasonably believe they are narrow. *Jehovah will not give his glory to any other*, Isa. xlii. 8. least of all will he give it to such an unworthy being as the devil.

The power of the Spirit of God is a boundless power. He acts on exterior beings to make them concur in our salvation. He acts on our blood and humours, to stir them to motion, or to reduce them to a calm. He acts on our spirits, I mean, on those subtile particles, which, with inconceivable rapidity, convey themselves into the divers organs of our bodies, and have an extensive influence over our faculties. He acts on our memories, to impress them with some objects, and to efface others. He acts immediately on the substance of our souls; he produceth ideas; he exciteth sensations; he suspendeth the natural effects of their union to the body. He sometimes, by this suspension, renders a martyr insensible to the action of the flames, that consume him; and teacheth him to say, even amidst the most cruel torments, *I glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh*

worketh patience; and patience experience, or proof, (this is a metaphor taken from gold, which is proved by the fire, that purifieth it,) *and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in* my *heart, by the holy Ghost, which is given unto* me, Rom. v. 3—5.

As the power of Satan is limited in its degrees, so it is also in its *duration.* Recollect a vision of St. John. *I saw,* said he, *an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more.* Rev. xx. 1—3. Without making any vain attempts to fix the sense of this vision, let us be content to derive this instruction from it, that the power of the devil is limited in its duration, as well as in its degrees. There are periods, in which Satan is *bound with the chain* of the superior power of the Holy Ghost. There are times, in which he is *shut up* in a prison, *sealed* with the seal of the decrees of God; a seal, that no created power can open.

The power of the Spirit of God is without limits in its periods, as it is in its degrees. Christian! the worse thy times are, the more ready will this Spirit be to succour thee, if thou implore his aid. Art thou near some violent operation? Doth an object fatal to thine innocence fill thee with fear and dread? Do *the sorrows of death compass thee? Do the pains of hell get hold on thee? Call upon the name of the Lord,* say, *O Lord! I beseech thee, deliver my soul,* Psal. cxvi. 3, 4. He will *hear thy voice, and thy supplications, and,* by the mighty action of his Spirit, he will *deliver thy soul from death, thine eyes from tears, and thy feet from falling,* ver. 1. 8.

How invincible soever *the hatred of Satan* to us may appear, it *cannot equal the love of God* for us; whatever desire the devil may have to destroy us, it cannot compare with that, which the holy Spirit hath to save us. It would be easy to enlarge these articles, and to increase their number: but our time is nearly elapsed. What success can Satan have against a spirit armed with so much power, and animated with so much love? *Surely, there is no inchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel. Ye have overcome them; because greater is he,*

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that is in you, than he, that is in the world, Numb. xxiii. 23.

My brethren, the age, for which God hath reserved us, hath a great resemblance to that of the apostles. Satan is as indefatigable now in his attempts to destroy mankind as he was then. We also have our Simons, who call themselves *the great power of God.* We have men like Ebion and Cerinthus; and if the ministers of Jesus Christ conquer the world, the world also conquers some of the ministers of Christ.

In which class, my brethren, must you be placed? In that of the disciples of false Christs, or in that of the disciples of the true Saviour? In the class of those, whom the world calls conquerors, or in the class of those who have conquered the world? On a clear answer to this question depends the consequence you must draw from the words of the text.

If you be of those, who are overcome by the world, the text should alarm and confound you. You have put arms into the hands of this enemy. Nothing but a fund of obstinacy and malice could have induced you to resist the superior means, which God hath employed to save you. You are that *vineyard,* of which the prophet said, *My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he fenced it, and built a tower, and planted it with the choicest vine; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes,* Isa. v. 1—3, and as you are the original of this portrait, you are also the object of the following threatening, *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down, and I will lay it waste, I will also command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it,* ver. 5, 6.

But the text ought to fill you with joy and consolation, if you be of those, who have overcome the world. What pleasure doth it afford a believer to remember his combats with the world, and his conquests over it! What unspeakable pleasure, to be able to say to himself; "In my youth, my vigorous constitution seemed to threaten to drive me to the utmost excesses; in my mature age, I walked in some slippery paths, which made me almost despair of preserving my candour and innocence; here, a certain company had an absolute authority over my mind, and used it only to seduce me;

me; there, an inveterate enemy put my resolution to the severest trial, and exhausted almost all my patience; here, false teachers, who were so dexterous in the art of enveloping the truth, that the most piercing eyes could scarcely discern it, had well nigh beguiled me; there, violent persecutors endeavoured to force me to an open abjuration of religion. Thanks be to God! I have resisted all these efforts; and, although Satan hath sometimes succeeded in his designs, and hath made me totter, he hath always failed in his main purpose, of making me fall finally, and of tearing me for ever from the communion of Jesus Christ."

The victories you have obtained, my brethren, are pledges of others, which you will yet obtain. Come again, next Lord's-day, and renew your strength at the table of Jesus Christ. Come, and promise him anew, that you will be always faithful to that religion, the light of which shines in your eyes with so much glory. Come, and protest to him, that you will give yourselves wholly up to those powerful motives to virtue, which his gospel affords. Come, and devote yourselves entirely to that spirit, which he hath given you. Having done these things, fear nothing; let your courage redouble, as your dangers increase.

All the attacks, which Satan hath made on your faith to this day, should prepare you for the greatest and most formidable attack of all; *ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin,* Heb. xii. 4. The last enemy, that shall *be destroyed, is death,* 1 Cor. xv. 26. The approaches of death are called *an agony,* that is, the combat by excellence. Then Satan will attack you with cutting griefs, with doubts, and remorse. He will represent to you a deplorable family, whose cries will pierce your hearts, and which, by tightening the ties that bind you to the world, will retain your souls on earth, while they long to ascend to heaven. He will terrify you with ideas of divine justice, and *fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries,* Heb. x. 27. He will paint in dismal colours to you the procession at your funeral, the torch, the shroud, and the grave.

But *he, who is in you,* will render you invulnerable to all these attacks. He will represent to you the delightful relations you are going to form; the heavenly societies, to which you are going to be united; the blessed angels, waiting to receive your souls. He will shew you that in the tomb of Jesus Christ, which will sanctify yours. He will remind you of that death of the Saviour, which renders your's precious

precious in the sight of God. He will open the gates of heaven to you, and will enable you to see, without a sigh, the foundations of the earth sinking away from your feet. He will change the groans of your death-beds into songs of triumph; and, amidst all your honours, he will teach each of you to exult, *Blessed be the Lord my strength, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight*, Psal. cxliv. 1. *Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ*, 2 Cor. ii. 14. *O death, where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory*, 1 Cor. xv. 55. God grant you this blessing. To him be honour and glory. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

THE ABSURDITY OF LIBERTINISM AND INFIDELITY.

PSALM, xciv. 7, 8, 9, 10.

They say, The Lord shall not see: neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand, ye most brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He, that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He, that formed the eye, shall he not see? He, that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? He, that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?

INVECTIVE and reproach seldom proceed from the mouth of a man, who loves truth and defends it. They are the usual weapons of them, who plead a desperate cause; who feel themselves hurt by a formidable adversary; who have not the equity to yield, when they ought to yield; and who have no other part to take, than that of supplying the want of solid reasons by odious names.

Yet, whatever charity we may have for erroneous people, it is difficult to see with moderation men obstinately maintaining some errors, guiding their minds by the corruption of their hearts, and choosing rather to advance the most palpable absurdities than to give the least check to the most irregular passions. Hear how the sacred authors treat people of this character. *My people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, they have no understanding. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart. O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? O foolish Galatians, who hath be-*

witched you? Jer. iv. 22. Isa. i. 3. Hos. vii. 11. Matt. iii. 7. and Gal. iii. 1.

Not to multiply examples, let it suffice to remark, that, if ever there were men, who deserved such odious names, they are such as our prophet describes. Those abominable men I mean, who, in order to violate the laws of religion without remorse, maintain, that religion is a chimera; who break down all the bounds, which God hath set to the wickedness of mankind, and who determine to be obstinate infidels, that they may be peaceable libertines. The prophet, therefore, lays aside, in respect to them, that charity, which a weak mind would merit, that errs only through the misfortune of a bad education, or the strait limits of a narrow capacity. *O ye most brutish among the people*, says he to them, *understand. Ye fools, when will ye be wise?*

People of this sort I intend to attack to-day. Not that I promise myself much success with them, or entertain hopes of reclaiming them. These are the *fools*, of whom Solomon says, *though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him*, Prov. xxvii. 22. But I am endeavouring to prevent the progress of the evil, and to guard our youth against favourable impressions of infidelity and libertinism, which have already decoyed away too many of our young people, and to confirm you all in your attachment to your holy religion. Let us enter into the matter.

In the style of the sacred authors, particularly in that of our prophet, to deny the existence of a God, the doctrine of Providence, and the essential difference between just and unjust, is one and the same thing. Compare the psalm, out of which I have taken my text, with the fourteenth, with the fifty-third, and particularly with the tenth, and you will perceive, that the prophet confounds them, who say *in their hearts there is no God*, with those, who say, *God hath forgotten; he hideth his face, he will never see it*, Psal. x. 11.

In effect, although the last of these doctrines may be maintained without admitting the first, yet the last is no less essential to religion than the first. And although a man may be a deist, and an epicurean, without being an atheist, yet the system of an atheist is no more odious to God than that of an epicurean, and that of a deist.

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I shall therefore make but one man of these different men, and, after the example of the prophet, I shall attack him with the same arms. In order to justify the titles, that he gives an infidel, I shall attack.

I. His taste.
II. His policy.
III. His indocility.
IV. His logics, or to spesk more properly, his way of reasoning.
V. His morality.
VI. His conscience.
VII. His politeness, and knowledge of the world.

In all these reflections, which I shall proportion to the length of these exercises, I shall pay more regard to the genius of our age than to that of the times of the prophet: and I shall do this the rather, because we cannot determine on what occasion the psalm was composed, of which the text is a part.

I. If you consider the *taste*, the discernment and choice of the people, of whom the prophet speaks, you will see, he had a great right to denominate them *most brutish* and *foolish*. What an excess must a man have attained, when he hates a religion, without which he cannot but be miserable! Who, of the happiest of mankind, doth not want the succour of religion? What disgraces at court! What mortifications in the army! What accidents in trade! What uncertainty in science! What bitterness in pleasure! What injuries in reputation! What inconstancy in riches! What disappointments in projects! What infidelity in friendship! What vicissitudes in fortune! Miserable man! What will support thee under so many calamities? What miserable comforters are the passions in these sad periods of life! How inadequate is philosophy itself, how improper is Zeno, how unequal are all his followers to the task of calming a poor mortal, when they tell him; "Misfortunes are inseparable from "human nature. No man should think himself exempt "from any thing, that belongs to the condition of mankind. "If maladies be violent, they will be short; if they be long, "they will be tolerable. A fatal necessity prevails over all "mankind; complaints and regrets cannot change the order "of things. A generous soul should be superior to all events,

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"it should despise a tyrant, defy fortune, and render itself "insensible to pain." Tolerable reflections in a book, plausible arguments in a public auditory! But weak reflections, vain arguments, in a bed of infirmity, while a man is suffering the pain of the gout, or the stone!

O! how necessary is religion to us in these fatal circumstances! It speaketh to us in a manner infinitely more proper to comfort us under our heaviest afflictions! Religion saith to you, *Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth evil and good*, Lam. iii. 38. *He formeth light and createth darkness; he maketh peace, and createth evil*, Isa. xlv. 7. *Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?* Amos. iii. 6. Religion tells you, that if God afflict you it is for your own advantage; it is, that, being uneasy on earth, you may take your flight toward heaven; that *your light affliction, which is but for a moment, may work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 17. Religion bids you *not to think it strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you*, 1 Pet. iv. 12. but to believe, that *the trial of your faith, being much more precious than that of gold, which perisheth, will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ*, chap. i. 7.

But religion is above all necessary in the grand vicissitude, in the fatal point, to which all the steps of life tend, I mean, at the hour of death. For, at length, after we have rushed into all pleasures, after we have sung well, danced well, feasted well, we must die, we must die. And what, pray, except religion, can support a man, struggling with *the king of terrors?* Job xviii. 14. A man, who sees his grandeur abased, his fortune distributed, his connections dissolved, his senses benumbed, his grave dug, the world retiring from him, his bones hanging on the verge of the grave, and his soul divided between the horrible hope of sinking into nothing, and the dreadful fear of falling into the hands of an angry God.

In sight of these formidable objects, fall, fall ye bandages of infidelity! ye vails of obscurity and depravity! and let me perceive how necessary religion is to man. It is that, which sweetens the bitterest of all bitters. It is that, which disarms the most invincible monster. It is that, which transformeth the most frightful of all objects, into an object of gratitude and joy. It is that, which calms the conscience,

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and confirms the soul. It is that, which presents to the dying believer another being, another life, another œconomy, other objects, and other hopes. It is that, which, *while the outward man perisheth, reneweth the inward man day by day*, 2 Cor. iv 16. It is that, which dissipates the horrors of *the valley of the shadow of death*, Psal. xxiii. 4. It is that, which cleaves the clouds in the sight of a departing Stephen; tells a converted thief, *to day shalt thou be in paradise*, Luke xxiii. 43. and cries to all true penitents, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord*, Rev. xiv. 13.

II. Having taken the unbelieving libertine on his own interest, I take him on the public interest, and, having attacked his taste, and discernment, I attack his *policy*. An infidel is a disturber of public peace, who, by undertaking to sap the foundations of religion, undermines those of society. *Society cannot subsist without religion.* If plausible objections may be formed against this proposition, it is because opponents have had the art of disguising it. To explain it, is to preclude the sophisms, which are objected against it. Permit us to lay down a few explanatory principles.

First. When we say, *Society cannot subsist without religion*, we do not comprehend in our proposition all the religions in the world. The proposition includes only those religions, which retain the fundamental principles, that constitute the base of virtue; as the immortality of the soul, a future judgment, a particular Providence. We readily grant, there may be in the world a religion worse than atheism: for example, any religion, that should command its votaries to kill, to assassinate, to betray. And, as we readily grant this truth to those, who take the pains to maintain it, so whatever they oppose to us, taken from the religions of pagans which were hurtful to society, is only vain declamation, that proves nothing against us.

Secondly. When we affirm, *Society cannot subsist without religion*, we do not pretend, that religion, which retains articles safe to society, may not so mix those articles with other principles pernicious to it, that they may seem at first sight worse than atheism. We affirm only, that, to take the whole of such a religion, it is more advantageous to society to have it, than to be destitute of it. All, therefore, that is objected against our proposition concerning those wars, crusades, and persecutions, which were caused by superstition,

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all this is only vain sophistry, which doth not affect our thesis in the least.

Thirdly. When we say, *Society cannot subsist without religion*, we do not say, that religion, even the purest religion, may not cause some disorders in society: but we affirm only, that these disorders, however numerous, cannot counterbalance the benefits, which religion procures to it. So that all objections, taken from the troubles, which zeal for truth may have produced in some circumstances, are only vain objections, that cannot weaken our proposition.

Fourthly. When we affirm, *Society cannot subsist without religion*, we do not affirm, that all the virtues, which are displayed in society, proceed from religious principles; so that all just magistrates are just for their love of equity; that all grave ecclesiastics are serious because they respect their character; that all chaste women are chaste from a principle of love to virtue: human motives, we freely grant, often prevail instead of better. We affirm only, that religious principles are infinitely more proper to regulate society than human motives. Many persons, we maintain, do actually govern their conduct by religious principles, and society would be incomparably more irregular, were there no religion in it. That list of virtues, therefore, which only education and constitution produce, doth not at all affect the principle, which we are endeavouring to establish, and he, who takes his objections from it, doth but beat the air.

Lastly. When we affirm, *Society cannot subsist without religion*, we do not say, that all atheists and deists ought therefore to abandon themselves to all sorts of vices: nor that they, who have embraced atheism, if indeed there have been any such, were always the most wicked of mankind. Many people of these characters, we own, lived in a regular manner. We affirm only, that irreligion, of itself, openeth a door to all sorts of vices; and that men are so formed, that their disorders would increase, were they to disbelieve the doctrines of the existence of a God, of judgment, and of Providence. All the examples, therefore, that are alledged against us, of a Diagoras, of a Theodorus, of a Pliny, of a Vanini, of some societies, real, or chimerical, who, it is pretended, lived regular lives without the aid of religion; all these examples, I say, make nothing against our hypothesis.

These explanations being granted, we maintain, that no politician can succeed in a design of uniting men in one social body without supposing the truth and reality of religion.

For,

For, if there be no religion, each member of society may do what he pleaseth; and then each would give a loose to his passions; each would employ his power in crushing the weak, his cunning in deceiving the simple, his eloquence in seducing the credulous, his credit in ruining commerce, his authority in distressing the whole with horror and terror, and carnage and blood. Frightful disorders in their nature: but necessary on principles of infidelity! For if you suppose, these disorders may be prevented, their prevention must be attributed, either to private interest, to worldly honour, or to human laws.

But *private interest* cannot supply the place of religion. True, were all men to agree to obey the precepts of religion, each would find his own account in his own obedience. But it doth not depend on an individual to oppose a popular torrent, to reform the public, and to make a new world: and, while the world continues in its present state, he will find a thousand circumstances, in which virtue is incompatible with private interest.

Nor can *worldly honour* supply the place of religion. For what is worldly honour? It is a superficial virtue; an art, that one man possesseth, of disguising himself from another; of deceiving politely; of appearing virtuous rather than of being actually so. If you extend the limits of wordly honour further, if you make it consist in that purity of conscience, and in that rectitude of intention, which are in effect firm and solid foundations of virtue, you will find, either that this is only a fine idea of what almost no body is capable of, or, if I may be allowed to say so, that the virtues, which compose your complex idea of worldly honour, are really branches of religion.

Finally. *Human laws* cannot supply the place of religion. To whatever degree of perfection they may be improved, they will always savour in three things of the imperfection of the legislators.

1. They will be *imperfect in their substance.* They may prohibit, indeed, enormous crimes: but they cannot reach refined irregularities, which are not the less capable of troubling society for appearing less atrocious. They may forbid murder, theft, and adultery: but they can neither forbid avarice, anger, nor concupiscence. They will avail in the preserving and disposing of property, they may command the payment of taxes to the crown, and of debts to the merchant, the cultivation of sciences, and liberal arts:

but they cannot ordain patience, meekness, and love; and, you will grant, a society, in which there is neither patience, meekness, nor love, must needs be an unhappy society.

2. Human laws will be *weak in their motives.* The rewards, which they offer, may be forborne, for men may do without them; the punishments, which they inflict, may be suffered; and there are some particular cases, in which they, who derogate from their authority, may advance their own interest more than if they constantly and scrupulously submit to it.

3. Human laws will be *restrained in their extent.* Kings, tyrants, masters of the world, know the art of freeing themselves from them. The laws avenge us on an insignificant thief, whom the pain of hunger and the fear of death tempted to break open our houses, to rob us of a trifling sum: but who will avenge us of magnificent thieves? For, my brethren, some men, in court-cabinets, in dedicatory epistles, in the sermons of flatterers, and in the prologues of poets, are called conquerors, heroes, demi-gods; but in this pulpit, in this church, in the presence of the God, who filleth this house, and who regardeth not the appearances of men, you conquerors, you heroes, you demi-gods, are often nothing but thieves and incendiaries. Who shall avenge us of those men, who at the head of a hundred thousand slaves, ravage the whole world, pillage on the right hand and on the left, violate the most sacred rights and overwhelm society with injustice and oppression? Who doth not perceive the insufficiency of human laws on this article, and the absolute necessity of religion?

III. The infidel carrieth his *indocility* to the utmost degree of extravagance, by undertaking alone to oppose all mankind, and by audaciously preferring his own judgment above that of the whole world, who, excepting a small number, have unanimously embraced the truths, which he rejects.

This argument, taken from unanimous consent, furnisheth in favour of religion, either a bare presumption, or a real demonstration, according to the different faces, under which it is presented.

It furnisheth a proof, perhaps more than presumptive, when it is opposed to the objections, which an unbelieving philosopher alledgeth against religion. For, although the faith of a rational man ought not to be founded on a plurality

lity of suffrages, yet unanimity of opinion is respectable, when it hath three characters. 1. *When an opinion prevails in all places.* Prejudice varies with climates, and whatever depends on human caprice differs in France, and in Spain, in Europe, and in Asia, according as the inhabitants of each country have their blood hot or cold; their imagination strong or weak. 2. *When an opinion prevails at all times.* Prejudices change with the times; years instruct: and experience corrects errors, which ages have rendered venerable. 3. *When an opinion is contrary to the passions of men.* A prejudice, that controuls human passions, cannot be of any long duration. The interest that a man hath in discovering his mistake will put him on using all his endeavours to develope a delusion. These three characters agree to truth only.

I am aware, that some pretend to enervate this argument by the testimonies of some ancient historians, and by the relations of some modern travellers, who tell us of some individuals, and of some whole societies, who are destitute of the knowledge of God, and of religion.

But, in order to a solid reply, we arrange these atheists, and deists, who are opposed to us, in three different classes. The first consists of philosophers, the next of the senseless populace, and the last of profligate persons. *Philosophers*, if you attend closely to the matter, will appear, at least the greatest part of them will appear, to have been accused of having no religion only because they had a purer religion than the rest of their fellow-citizens. They would not admit a plurality of gods, they were, therefore, accused of believing no God. The infidelity of *the senseless populace*, is favourable to our argument. We affirm, wherever there is a spark of reason, there is also a spark of religion. Is it astonishing that they, who have renounced the former, should renounce the latter also? As to *the profligate*, who extinguish their own little light, we say of them, with a modern writer, *It is glorious to religion to have enemies of this character.*

But let us see, whether this unanimous consent, which hath afforded us a presumption in favour of religion, will furnish us with a demonstration against those, who oppose it.

Authority ought never to prevail over our minds against a judgment, grounded on solid reasons, and received on a cool examination. But authority, especially an authority founded on unanimity of sentiments, ought always to sway

our minds in regard to a judgment formed without solid reasons, without examination, and without discussion. No men deserve to be called the most *foolish*, and the *most brutish* among the people*, so much as those men, who being, as the greatest number of infidels are, without study, and without knowledge; who, without deigning to weigh, and even without condescending to hear the reasons, on which all the men in the world, except a few, found the doctrine of the existence of God, and of Providence, give themselves an air of infidelity, and insolently say; Mercury Trismegistus, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Seneca; moreover, Moses, Solomon, Paul, and the apostles, taught such and such doctrines: but, for my part I am not of their opinion. And on what ground, pray, do you reject the doctrines, which have been defended by such illustrious men? Do you know, that, of all characters, there is not one so difficult to sustain, as that, which you affect? For as you deny the most common notions, the clearest truths, sentiments, which are the most generally received, if you would maintain an appearance of propriety of character, you must be a superior genius. You must make profound researches, digest immense volumes, and discuss many an abstract question. You must learn the art of evading demonstrations, of palliating sophisms, of parrying ten thousand thrusts, that from all parts will be taken at you. But you, contemptible genius! you idiot! you, who hardly know how to arrange two words without offending against the rules of grammar, or to associate two ideas without shocking common sense, how do you expect to sustain a character, which the greatest geniusses are incapable of supporting?

IV. Yet, as no man is so unreasonable as not to profess to reason; and as no man takes up a notion so eagerly as not to pique himself on having taken it up after a mature deliberation; we must talk to the infidel as to a philosopher, who always follows the dictates of reason, and argues by principles and consequences. Well then! Let us examine *his*

* Mr. Saurin follows the reading of the French version, les *plus* brutaux, *most* brutish. This is perfectly agreeable to the original, for the Hebrew forms the superlative degree by prefixing the letter *beth* to a noun-substantive, which follows an adjective, as here, Cant. 1. 8. Prov. xxx. 30, hominum brutissimum stipudissimi; totius hujus populi stupidissimi; mentators.

his logic, or, as I said before, *his way of reasoning*; his way of reasoning, you will see, is his brutality, and his logic constitutes his extravagance.

In order to comprehend this, weigh, in the most exact and equitable balance, the argument of our prophet. *He, that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He, that formed the eye, shall he not see? He, that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? He, that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?* These are, in brief, three sources of evidences, which supply the whole of religion with proof. The first are taken from the works of nature; *He who planted the ear*; *He, who formed the eye.* The second are taken from the œconomy of Providence; *He that chastiseth the heathen.* The third are taken from the history of the church; *He that teacheth man knowledge.*

The first are taken from the wonderful works of *nature.* The prophet alledgeth only two examples; the one is that of the *ear*, the other that of the *eye.* None can communicate what he hath not, is the most incontestible of all principles. He, who communicateth faculties to beings, whom he createth, must needs possess whatever is most noble in such faculties. He, who empowered creatures to hear, must himself hear. He, who imparted the faculty of discerning objects, must needs himself discern them. Consequently, there is great extravagance in saying, *The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.*

The same argument, which the structure of our ears, and that of our eyes, affords us, we derive also from all the wonderful works of the Creator. The Creator possesseth all those great and noble excellencies, in a supreme degree, the faint shadows of which he hath communicated to creatures. On this principle, what an idea ought we to form of the Creator? From what a profound abyss of power must those boundless spaces have proceeded, that immeasurable extent, in which imagination is lost, those vast bodies, that surround us, those luminous globes, those flaming spheres, which revolve in the heavens, along with all the other works, that compose this universe? From what an abyss of wisdom must the successions of seasons, of day, and of night, have proceeded, those glittering stars, so exact in their courses, and so punctual in their duration; along with all the different secret springs in the universe, which with the utmost accuracy answer their design? From what an abyss of intelligence must rational creatures come, beings, who constitute the glory of the intelligent

telligent world; profound politicians, who pry into the most intricate folds of the human heart; generals, who diffuse themselves through a whole army, animating with their eyes, and with their voices, the various regiments, which compose their forces; admirable geniusses, who develope the mysteries of nature, rising into the heavens by dioptrics, descending into the deepest subterranean abysses; quitting continental confinement by the art of navigation; men, who across the waves, and in spite of the winds, contemn the rocks, and direct a few planks fastened together to sail to the most distant climes? Who can refuse to the author of all these wonderful works the faculty of seeing and hearing?

But I do not pretend to deny, an infidel will say, that all these wonderful works owe their existence to a Supreme cause; or that the Supreme Being, by whom alone they exist, doth not himself possess all possible perfection. But I affirm, that the Supreme Being is so great, and so exalted, that his elevation and inconceivable excellence prevent him from casting his eyes down to the earth, and paying any regard to what a creature so mean and so indigent as man performs. A Being of infinite perfection, does he interest himself in my conduct? Will he stoop to examine, whether I retain or discharge the wages of my servants? Whether I be regular or irregular in my family? and so on. A king, surrounded with magnificence and pomp, holding in his powerful hands the reigns of his empire; a king, employed in weighing reasons of state, in equipping his fleets, and in levying his armies; will he concern himself with the demarches of a few worms crawling beneath his feet?

But this comparison of God to a king, and of men to worms, is absurd and inconclusive. The œconomy of Providence, and the history of the church, in concert with the wonderful works of nature, discover to us ten thousand differences between the relations of God to men and those of a king to worms of the earth. No king hath given intelligent souls to worms: but God hath given intelligent souls to us. No king hath proved, by ten thousand avenging strokes, and by ten thousand glorious rewards, that he observed the conduct of worms: but God, by ten thousand glorious recompenses, and by ten thousand vindictive punishments, hath proved his attention to the conduct of men. No king hath made a covenant with worms: but God hath entered into covenant with us. No king hath commanded worms to obey him: but God, we affirm, hath ordained our obedience

to

to him. No king can procure eternal felicity to worms: but God can communicate endless happiness to us. A king, although he be a king, is yet a man; his mind his little and contracted, yea infinitely contracted; it would be absurd, that he, being called to govern a kingdom, should fill his capacity with trifles: But is this your notion of the Deity? The direction of the sun, the government of the world, the formation of myriads of beings, which live through universal nature, the management of the whole universe, cannot exhaust that intelligence, who is the object of our adoration and praise. While his thoughts include, in their boundless compass, all real and all possible beings, his eyes survey every individual, as if each were the sole object of his attention.

These arguments being thus stated, either our infidel must acknowledge, that they, at least, render probable the truth of religion in general, and of this thesis in particular, *God regardeth the actions of men:* or he refuseth to acknowledge it. If he refuse to acknowledge it; if he seriously affirm, that all these arguments, very far from arising to demonstration, do not even afford a probability in favour of religion; then he is an idiot, and there remains no other argument to propose to him, than that of our prophet, *Thou fool when wilt thou be wise?*

I even question whether any unbeliever could ever persuade himself of what he endeavours to persuade others; that is, that the assemblage of truths, which constitute the body of natural religion; that the heavy strokes of justice avenging vice, and the extatic rewards accompanying virtue, which appear in Providence; that the accomplishment of numerous prophecies; that the operation of countles miracles, which are related in authentic histories of the church; no, I cannot believe, that any infidel could ever prevail with himself to think, that all this train of argument doth not form a probability against a system of infidelity and atheism.

But if the power and the splendor of truth force his consent; if he be obliged to own, that, although my arguments are not demonstrative, they are, however, in his opinion, probable; then, with the prophet, I say to him, *O thou most brutish among the people!*

V. Why? Because in comparing his logic with his *morality*, (and this is my fifth article,) I perceive, that nothing but an excess of brutality can unite these two things. Hear how

how he reasons. "It is probable, not only that there is a "God, but also that this God regardeth the actions of men, "that he reserves to himself the punishment of those, who "follow the suggestions of vice, and the rewarding of them, "who obey the laws of virtue. The system of irreligion is "counterbalanced by that of religion. Perhaps irreligion "may be well grounded: but perhaps religion may be so. "In this state of uncertainty, I will direct my conduct on "the principle, that irreligion is well-grounded, and that "religion hath no foundation. "*I will break in pieces,*" ver. v. (this was the language, according to our psalmist, of the unbelievers of his time,) "*I will break in pieces the "people of God; I will afflict his heritage; I will slay "the widow and the stranger;* or, to speak agreeably to "the genius of our own time, I will spend my life in pleasure, "in gratifying my sensual appetites, in avoiding what would "check me in my course, in a word, in living as if I were "able to demonstrate either that there was no God, or that he "paid no regard to the actions of men." Ought he not, rather, on the contrary, as his mind is in a state of uncertainty between both, to attach himself to that, which is the most safe? Ought he not to say? "I will so regulate my conduct, "that, if there be a God, whose existence, indeed, I doubt, "but, however, am not able to disprove: If God pay any "regard to the actions of men, which I question, but can- "not deny; he may not condemn me." Judge ye, christians! men, who can thus brutally insult a dark futurity, and the bare possibility of those punishments, which religion denounceth against the wicked; such men, are they not, either the most foolish, or the most brutish, among the people? *Understand, ye most brutish among the people! Ye fools! When will ye be wise?*

VI. I would attack *the conscience* of the libertine, and terrify him with the language of my text. *He, who teacheth man knowledge, shall not he correct?* That is to say, *He, who gave you laws, shall not he regard your violation of them?* The persons whom I attack, I am aware, have defied us to find the least vestige of what is called conscience in them. But had you thoroughly examined yourselves, when you set us at defiance on this article? Have you been as successful, as you pretend to have been, in your daring enterprize of freeing yourselves entirely from the terrors of conscience? Is this light quite extinct? This interior master,

master, doth he dictate nothing to you? This rack of the Almighty, doth it never force you to confess what you would willingly deny? Are your knees so firm, that they never smite together with dread and horror?

The question, concerning the possibility of entirely freeing a man from the empire of conscience, is a matter of fact. We think, we have reason for affirming, that no man can bring himself to such a state. You pretend to be yourselves a demonstration to the contrary. You are, you declare, perfectly free from the attacks of conscience. This is a fact, and I grant it; I take your word. But here is another fact, in regard to which we ought to believe in our turn, and on which our word is as much worth as yours. This is it. We have seen a great number of sick people; we have attended a great number of dying people. Among those, to whom in the course of our ministry we have been called, we have met with all sorts of characters. We have visited some, who once were what you profess to be now, people, who boasted of having freed themselves from vulgar errors, from the belief of a God, a religion, a hell, a heaven, and of saying, when they abandoned themselves to the utmost excesses, as you say, *The Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.* But we have never met with a single individual, no, not one, who hath not contradicted himself at the approach of death. It is said some have done this. For our parts, we have never met with any such; we have never attended one, who hath not proved by his example, that you will contradict yourselves also. We have often visited those, who have renounced all their systems, and have cursed their infidelity a thousand, and a thousand times. We have visited many, who have required the aid of that very religion, which they had ridiculed. We have often seen those, who have called superstition to assist religion; and who have turned pale, trembled, and shaken, at the bare sight of our habit, before they had heard the sentence, which God pronounced by our mouths. But we have never seen an individual, no, not one, who died in his pretended scepticism: It remains with you to account for these facts. You are to inquire, whether you yourselves will be more courageous. It belongs to you to examine, whether you can bear those dying agonies, those devouring regrets, those terrible misgivings, which made your predecessors unsay all, and discover as much cowardice at death, as they had discovered brutality in their lives.

VII. Perhaps you have been surprized, my brethren, that we have reserved the weakest of our attacks for the last. Perhaps you object, that motives, taken from what is called *politeness*, and *a knowledge of the world*, can make no impressions on the minds of those, who did not feel the force of our former attacks. It is not without reason, however, that we have placed this last. Libertines and infidels often pique themselves on their *gentility*, and *good breeding*. They frequently take up their system of infidelity, and pursue their course of profaneness, merely through their false notions of gentility. Reason, they think, too scholastic, and faith, pedantry. They imagine, that, in order to distinguish themselves in the world, they must affect neither to believe nor to reason.

Well! you *accomplished gentleman!* do you know what the world thinks of you? The prophet tells you; but it is not on the authority of the prophet only, it is on the opinions of your fellow citizens, that I mean to persuade you. You are considered in the world as the *most brutish of* mankind. *Understand, ye most brutish among the people!* What is *an accomplished gentleman?* What is politeness and good breeding? It is the art of accommodating one's self to the genius of that society, and of seeming to enter into the sentiments of that company, in which we are; of appearing to honour what they honour; of respecting what they respect; and of paying a regard even to their prejudices, and their weaknesses. On these principles, are you not *the rudest and most unpolished* of mankind? Or, to repeat the language of my text, are you not the *most brutish among the people?* You live among people, who believe a God, and a religion; among people, who were educated in these principles, and who desire to die in these principles; among people, who have, many of them, sacrificed their reputation, their ease, and their fortune, to religion. Moreover, you live in a society, the foundations of which sink with those of religion, so that were the latter undermined, the former would, therefore, be sunk. All the members of society are interested in supporting this edifice, which you are endeavouring to destroy. The magistrate commands you not to publish principles that tend to the subversion of his authority. The people request you not to propagate opinions, which tends to subject them to the passions of a magistrate, who will imagine, he hath no judge superior to himself. This distressed mother, mourning for the loss of her

her only son, prays you not to deprive her of the consolation, which she derives from her present persuasion, that the son, whom she laments, is in possession of immortal glory. That sick man beseecheth you not to disabuse him of an error, that sweetens all his sorrows. Yon dying man begs you would not rob him of his only hope. The whole world conjures you not to establish truths, (even supposing they were truths, an hypothesis which I deny and detest,) the whole world conjures you not to establish truths, the knowledge of which would be fatal to all mankind. In spite of so many voices, in spite of so many prayers, in spite of so many intreaties, and among so many people interested in the establishment of religion; to affirm that religion is a fable, to oppose it with eagerness and obstinacy, to try all your strength, and to place all your glory, in destroying it: What is this but the height of rudeness, brutality, and madness? *Understand, ye most brutish among the people? Ye fools? When will ye be wise?*

Let us put a period to this discourse. We come to you, my brethren! When we preach against characters of these kinds, we think, we read what passes in our hearts. You congratulate yourselves, for the most part, for not being of the number, for detesting infidelity, and for respecting religion. But shall we tell you my brethren? How odious soever the men are, whom we have described, we know others more odious still. There is a restriction in the judgment, which the prophet forms of the first, when he calls them in the text, *The most foolish, and the most brutish among the people;* and there are some men, who surpass them in brutality and extravagance.

Do not think we exceed the truth of the matter, or that we are endeavouring to obtain your attention by paradoxes. Really, I speak as I think; I think, there is more ingeniousness, and even, (if I may venture to say so,) a less fund of turpitude in men, who, having resolved to roll on with the torrent of their passions, endeavour to persuade themselves, either that there is no God, or that he pays no regard to the actions of men; than in those, who, believing the existence, and providence of God, live as if they believed neither. Infidels were not able to support, in their excesses, the ideas of an injured benefactor, of an angry Supreme Judge, of an eternal salvation neglected, of daring hell, a *lake burning with fire and brimstone, and smoke ascending*

up for ever and ever, Rev. xxi. 8. and xiv. 11. In order to give their passions a free scope, they found it necessary to divert their attention from all these terrifying objects, and to efface such shocking truths from their minds.

But you! who believe the being of a God! You! who believe yourselves under his eye, and who insult him every day without repentance, or remorse! You! who believe, God holds thunder in his hand to crush sinners, and yet live in sin! You! who think, there are devouring flames, and chains of darkness, and yet presumptuously brave their horrors! You! who believe the immortality of your souls, and yet occupy yourselves about nothing but the present life! What a front! What a brazen front is YOURS!

You consider a revelation proceeding from heaven, and supported by a thousand authentic proofs. But, if your faith be well grounded, how dangerous is your condition! For, after all, the number of evidences, who attest the religion, which you believe, this number of witnesses depose the truth of the practical part of religion, as well as the truth of the speculative part. These witnesses attest, that *without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;* that *neither thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God*, Heb. xii. 14. 1 Cor. vi. 10. And consequently, these evidences attest that you thieves, that you covetous, that you drunkards, that you revilers, that you extortioners, shall be excluded from that happy mansion. Do you reject this proposition? Class yourselves then with infidels. Contradict nature; contradict conscience; contradict the church; deny the recovery of strength to the lame; the giving of sight to the blind; the raising of the dead; contradict heaven, and earth, and sea, nature, and every element. Do you admit the proposition? Acknowledge then, that you must be irretrievably lost unless your ideas be reformed and renewed, unless you renounce the world, that enchants and fascinates your eyes.

This, my brethren, this is your remedy. This is what we hope for you. This is that, to which we exhort you by the compassion of God, and by the great salvation, which religion presents to you. Respect this religion. Study it every day. Apply its comforts to your sorrows,

and

and its precepts to your lives. And, joining promises to precepts, and precepts to promises, assort your christianity. Assure yourselves, then, of the peace of God in this life, and of a participation of his glory after death. God grant you this grace! Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

THE SALE OF TRUTH.

PROV. xxiii. 23.

Sell not the Truth.

IF Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more, Numb. xxii. 18. This was the language of a man, whose memory the church holds in execration: but who, when he pronounced these words, was a model worthy of the imitation of the whole world. A king sent for him; made him, in some sort, the arbiter of the success of his arms; considered him as one, who could command victory as he pleased: put a commission to him into the hands of the most illustrious persons of his court; and accompanied it with presents, the magnificence of which was suitable to the favour he solicited. Balaam was very much struck with so many honours, and charmed with such extraordinary presents. He felt all, that a man of mean rank owed to a king, who sought, and solicited his help: but he felt still more the majesty of his own character. He professed himself a minister of that God, before whom *all nations are as a drop of a bucket*, Isa. xl. 15. and, considering Balak, and his courtiers, in this point of view, he sacrificed empty honour to solid glory, and exclaimed in this heroical style, *If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.* Moreover, before Balak, in the presence of all his courtiers, and, so to speak, in sight of heaps of silver and gold sparkling to seduce him, he gave himself up to the emotions of the prophetic spirit, that animated him, and, burning with that divine fire, which this spirit kindled in his soul, he uttered these

these sublime words; *Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? Behold, I have received commandment to bless; and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it. Surely there is no inchantment against Jacob, neither is their any divination against Israel,* Numb. xxiii. 7, 8. 20. 23. *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel,* chap. xxiv. 5.

I would excite your zeal to day, my brethern, by an example so worthy of your emulation. A few days ago, you remember, we endeavoured to shew you the importance of this precept of Solomon, *Buy the truth.* We pointed out to you then the means of making the valuable acquisition of truth. We told you, God had put it up at a price, and that he required, in order to your possession of it, the sacrifice of dissipation, the sacrifice of indolence, the sacrifice of precipitancy of judgment, the sacrifice of prejudice, the sacrifice of obstinacy, the sacrifice of curiosity, and the sacrifice of the passions. In order to inspire you with the noble design of making all these sacrifices, we expatiated on the worth of truth, and endeavoured to convince you of its value in regard to that natural desire of man, the increase and perfection of his intelligence, which it fully satisfies; in regard to the ability, which it affords a man to fill those posts in society, to which Providence calls him: in regard to those scruples, which disturb a man's peace, concerning the choice of a religion, scruples which truth perfectly calms; and, finally, in regard to the banishment of those doubts, which distress people in a dying hour, doubts, which are always intolerable, and which become most exquisitely so, when they relate to questions so interesting as those, that revolve in the mind of a dying man.

Having thus endeavoured to engage you to *buy the truth,* when it is proposed to you, we are going to exhort you to day to preserve it carefully after you have acquired it. We are going to inforce this salutary advice, that, were ten thousand envoys from Moab, and from Midian, to endeavour to ensnare you, you ought to sacrifice all things rather than betray it, and to attend to the same Solomon, who last Lord's-day said, *Buy the truth,* saying to you to day, *and sell it not.*

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If what we shall propose to you now require less exercise of your minds than what we said to you in our former discourse, it will excite a greater exercise of your hearts. When you hear us examine the several cases, in which *the truth is sold*, you may perhaps have occasion for all your respect for us to hear with patience what we shall say on these subjects.

But, if a preacher always enervate the force of his preaching, when he violates the precepts himself, the necessity of which he urgeth to others, doth he not enervate them in a far more odious manner still, when he violates them while he is recommending them; preaching humility with pride and arrogance; enforcing restitution on others, while he himself is clothed with the spoils of the fatherless and the widow; pressing the importance of fraternal love with hands reeking, as it were, with the blood of his brethren? What idea, then, would you form of us, if while we are exhorting you *not to sell truth*, any human motives should induce us to *sell* it, by avoiding to present portraits too striking, lest any of you should know yourselves again. God forbid we should do so! *If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to speak less or more.* Allow us, then, that noble liberty, which is not inconsistent with the profound respect, which persons of our inferior station owe to an auditory as illustrious as this, to which we have the honour to preach. Permit us to forget every interest but that of *truth*; and to have no object in view but your salvation and our own. And thou, God of *truth!* fill my mind, during the whole of this sermon, with this exhortation of thine apostle; *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine,* 2. Tim. iv. 1, 2. *Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee,* 1 Tim. iv. 16. Amen.

You may comprehend what we mean by *selling truth*, if you remember what, we said, it is *to buy* it. *Truth*, according to our definition last Lord's day, is put in our text for an agreement between the nature of an object and the idea we form of it. *To buy Truth* is to make all the sacrifices, which are necessary for the obtaining of ideas conformable to the objects, of which they ought to be the express

images. On this principle, our text, I think, will admit of only three senses, in each of which we may *sell truth.*

1. *Sell not the truth*, that is to say, do not lose the disposition of mind, that aptness to universal truth, when you have acquired it. Justness of thinking, and accuracy of reasoning, are preserved by the same means, by which they are procured. As the constant use of these means is attended with difficulty, the practice of them frequently tires people out. There are seeds of some passions, which remain, as it were, buried during the first years of life, and which vegetate only in mature age. There are virtues, which some men would have practised till death, had their condition been always the same. A Roman historian remarks of an emperor*, that *he always would have merited the imperial dignity, had he never arrived at it.* He, who was a model of docility, when he was only a disciple, became inaccessible to reason and evidence as soon as he was placed in a doctor's chair. He, who applied himself wholly to the sciences, while he considered his application as a road to the first offices in the state, became wild in his notions, and lost all the fruits of his former attention, as soon as he obtained the post, which had been the object of all his wishes. As people neglect advancing in the path of *truth*, they lose the habit of walking in it. The mind needs aliment and nourishment, as well as the body. *To sell truth* is to lose, by dissipation, that aptness to *universal truth*, which had been acquired by attention; to lose, by precipitation, by prejudice, by obstinacy, by curiosity, by gratifying the passions, those dispositions, which had been acquired by opposite means. This is the first sense, that may be given to the precept, *Sell not the truth.*

2. The wise man perhaps intended to excite those, who possess superior knowledge, to communicate it freely to others. He intended, probably, to reprove those mercenary souls, who trade with their wisdom, and *sell it*, as it were, by the penny. This sense seems to be verified by the following words, *wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.* Some supply the first verb *buy*, *buy wisdom and instruction.* The last verb may also be naturally joined to the same words, and the passage may be read, *Sell neither wisdom, nor instruction.* Not that Solomon intended to subvert an order established in society; for it is equitable, that

* Galba. Tacit. Hist. Lib. 1.

that they, who have spent their youth in acquiring literature, and have laid out a part of their fortune in the acquisition, should reap the fruit of their labour, and be indemnified for the expence of their education; *the workman is worthy of his meat, and they, who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel,* Matt. x. 10. 1 Cor. ix 14. Yet, the same Jesus Christ, who was the herald, as well as the pattern of disinterestedness, said to his discsples, when he was speaking to them of the miracles, which he had impowered them to perform; and of the truths of the gospel in general, which he intrusted them to preach, *Freely ye have received, freely give,* Matt. x. 8. And St. Paul was so far from staining his apostleship with a mercenary spirit, that, when he thought a reward for his ministry was likely to tarnish its glory, he chose rather to work with his hands than to accept it. That great man, who had acquired the delightful habit of living upon meditation and study, and of expanding his soul in contemplating abstract things; that great man was seen to supply his wants by working at the mean trade of tent-making, while he was labouring at the same time in constructing the mystical tabernacle, the church; greater in this noble abasement than his pretended successors in all their pride and pomp. A man of superior understanding ought to devote himself to the service of the state. His depth of knowledge should be a public fount, from which each individual should have a liberty to draw. A physician owes that succour to the poor, which his profession affords; the counsellor owes them his advice; the casuit his directions; without expecting any other reward than that, which God hath promised to benevolence. I cannot help repeating here the idea, which Cicero gives us of those ancient Romans, who lived in the days of the liberty, and of the true glory of Rome. *They acquainted themselves,* says the orator, *with whatever might be useful to the republic. They were seen walking backward, and forward, in the public places of the city, in order to afford a freedom of access to any of the citizens, who wanted their advice, not only on matters of jurisprudence, but on any other affairs, as on the marrying of a daughter, the purchasing, or improving of a farm, or, in short, on any other article, that might concern them**.

* De oratore, Lib. iii.

3. A third sense may be given to the precept of Solomon, and, by *selling* we may understand what, in modern style, we call *betraying truth*. *To betray truth* is, through any sordid motive, to suppress, or to disguise, things of consequence to the glory of religion, the interest of a neighbour, or the good of society.

It would be difficult to demonstrate which of these three meanings is most conformable to the design of Solomon. In detached sentences, such as most of the writings of Solomon are, an absolute sense cannot be precisely determined: but, if the interpreter ought to suspend his judgment, the preacher may regulate his choice by circumstances, and, of several probable meanings, all agreeable to the analogy of faith and to the genius of the sacred author, may take that sense, which best suits the state of his audience. If this be a wise maxim, we are obliged, methinks, having indicated the three significations, to confine ourselves to the third.

In this sense, we observe six orders of persons, who may *sell truth*.

I. The courtier.
II. The indiscreet zealot.
III. The apostate, and the Nicodemite.
IV. The judge.
V. The politician.
VI. The pastor.

A courtier may *sell truth* by a mean adulation. An indiscreet zealot by pious frauds, instead of defending *truth* with the arms of *truth* alone. An apostate, and a Nicodemite, by *loving this present world*, 2 Tim. iv 10. or by fearing persecution, when they are called *to give a reason of the hope that is in them*, 1 Pet. iii.. 15. and to follow the example of that Jesus, *who*, according to the apostle, *before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession*, 1 Tim. vi. 13. A judge may *sell truth* by a spirit of partiality, when he ought to be blind to the appearance of persons. A politician, by a criminal caution, when he ought to probe the wounds of the state, and to examine, in public assemblies, what are the real causes of its decay, and who are the true authors of its miseries. In fine, a pastor may *sell truth* through a cowardice, that prevents his *declaring all the counsel of God;* his *declaring unto Jacob his transgression,*

gression, and to Israel his sin, Micah iii. 8. Thus the flattery of the courtier; the pious frauds of the indiscreet zealot; the worldly-mindedness, and timidity of the apostate, and of the Nicodemite; the partiality of the judge; the criminal circumspection of the members of legislative bodies; and the cowardice of the pastor; are six defects, which we mean to expose, six sources of reflections, that will supply the remainder of this discourse.

I. Mean *adulation* is the first vice we attack; the first way of *selling truth.* We intend here that fraudulent traffic, which aims, at the expence of a few unmeaning applauses, to procure solid advantages; and, by erecting an altar to the person addressed, and by offering a little of the smoke of the incense of flattery, to conciliate a profitable esteem. This unworthy commerce is not only carried on in the palaces of kings, it is almost every where seen, where superiors and inferiors meet; because, generally speaking, wherever there are superiors, there are people who love to hear the language of adulation; and because, wherever there are inferiors, there are people mean enough to let them hear it. What a king is in his kingdom a governor is in his province; what a governor is in his province a nobleman is in his estate; what a nobleman is in his estate a man of trade is among his workmen and domestics. Further, the incense of flattery doth not always ascend from an inferior only to a superior, people on the same line in life mutually offer it to one another, and sometimes the superior stoops to offer it to the inferior. There are men who expect, that each member of society should put his hand to forward the building of a fortune, which entirely employs themselves, and which is the spring of every action of their own lives; people who aim to shelter themselves under the protection of the great, to incorporate their own reputation with that of illustrious persons, to accumulate wealth, and to lord it over the lower part of mankind. These people apply one engine to all men, which is flattery. They proportion it to the various orders of persons, whom they address; they direct it according to their different foibles; vary it according to various circumstances; give it a different ply at different times; and artfully consecrate to it, not only their voice, but whatever they are, and whatever they possess. They practise an absolute authority over their countenances, compose them to an air of pleasure, distort them to pain, gild them with gladness,

gladness, or becloud them with grief. They are indefatigable in applauding; they never present themselves before a man, without exciting agreeable ideas in him, and these they never fail to excite, when, blind to his frailties, they affect an air of extacy at his virtues, and hold themselves ready to publish his abilities and his acquisitions for prodigies. They acquire friends of the most opposite characters; because they praise alike the most opposite qualities. They bestow as much praise on the violent as on the moderate; they praise pride as much as they praise humility; and give equal encomiums to the lowest avarice and to the highest generosity.

Such is the character of the flatterer. This is the first traffic, which the wise man forbids. *Sell not the truth.* Shameful traffic! a traffic unworthy not only of a christian, and of a philosopher; but of every man, who preserves the smallest degree of his primitive liberty. Against this traffic, the church and the synagogue, christianity and paganism, St. Paul and Seneca have alike remonstrated. A traffick shameful, not only to him, who offers this false incense; but to him, who loves and enjoys it. The language of a courtier, who elevates his prince above humanity, is often a sure mark of his inward contempt of him. A man, who exaggerates and amplifies your virtues, takes it for granted that you know not yourself. He lays it down for a principle, that you are vain, and that you love to see yourself only on your bright side. His adulation is grounded on a belief of your injustice, he knows, you arrogate a glory to yourself, to which you have no just pretension. He lays it down for a principle, that you are destitute of all delicacy of sentiment, and that you prefer empty applause before respectful silence. He lays it down for a principle, that you have little, or no religion, as you violate its most sacred law, humility. A man must be very short-sighted, he must be a mere novice in the world, and a stranger to the human heart, if he be fond of flattering elogiums. There is no king so cruel, no tyrant so barbarous, no monster so odious, whom flattery doth not elevate above the greatest heroes. The traffic of the flatterer, then, is equally shameful to him, who *sells truth*, and to him who buys it.

II. *Indiscreet zealots* make the second class of them, who *sell truth.* If the zealot be guilty of the same crime, he is so from a motive, more proper, it should seem, to exculpate him. He useth falshood only to establish *truth;* and, if he commit a fraud, it is a fraud consecrated to religion.

gion. I am not surprized, my brethren, that the partisans of erroneous communities have used this method; and that they have advanced, to establish it, arguments, in their own opinions, inconclusive, and facts of their own invention. A certain cardinal, who made himself famous in the church by his theological attacks on the protestants, and who became more so still by the repulses, which the latter gave him, hath been justly reproached with using these methods. People have applied that comparison to him, which he applied to a certain African, named Leo, whom he likens to that amphibious bird in the fable, which was sometimes a bird, and sometimes a fish; a bird, when the king of the fish required tribute, and a fish, when the king of the birds demanded it*.

To supply the want of truth with falshood is a kind of *wisdom*, that better becomes *the children of this world*, Luke xvi. 8. than the ministers of the living God. It would be hardly credible, unless we saw it with our own eyes, that the ministers of God should use the same arms, which the ministers of the devil employ; and endeavour to support a religion founded on reason and argument by the very same artifices, which are only needful to uphold a religion founded alone on the fancies of men. We blush for religion when we see the primitive fathers adopting this method, not only in the heat of argument, when disputants forget their own principles, but coolly, and deliberately. We are ashamed of primitive times, when we hear a St Jerome commending those, who said not what they believed, but whatever they thought proper to confound their pagan opponents, making a captious distinction between what was written in *dogmatizing*, and what was written in *disputing*; and maintaining, that, in disputing, people were free to use what arguments they would, to promise bread, and to produce a stone†. We are confounded at finding, among the archives of christianity, letters of Lentulus to the Roman senate in favour of Jesus Christ; those of Pilate to Tiberius; of Paul to Seneca, and of Seneca to Paul; yea those of king Agbarus to Jesus Christ, and of Jesus Christ to king Agbarus. We are shocked at hearing the fathers compare the pretended Sibylline oracles to the inspired prophecies; attribute an equal authority to them; cite them with the same confidence; and thus expose christianity

* See Bayle in the article *Bellarmin*. Rem. D.

† Epist. ad Pammach. Vide Daille usage des peers; chap. vi.

christianity to the objections of its enemies*. And would to God we ourselves had never seen among us celebrated divines derive, from the visions of enthusiasts, arguments to uphold the truth!

Mere human prudence is sufficient to perceive the injustice of this method. The pious frauds of the primitive ages are now the most powerful objections, that the enemies of religion can oppose against it. They have excited suspicions about the real monuments of the church, by producing the spurious writings, which an indiscreet zeal had propagated for its glory; and those unworthy artifices have a thousand times oftener shaken believers than reclaimed infidels.

God anciently forbade the Jews to offer to him in sacrifice *the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog*, Deut. xxiii. 18. Will he suffer christianity to be established, as the religion of Mohammed is propagated? Will Jesus Christ call Belial to his aid? Shall light apply to the powers of darkness to spread the glory of its rays? And do we not always sin against this precept of Solomon, *Sell not the truth*, when we part with truth even to obtain truth itself?

III. We put Apostates, and time-servers, or Nicodemites, in the third class of those, who *sell truth*.

1. Apostates - - - - - - But we need not halt to attack an order of men, against which every thing becomes a pursuing minister of the vengeance of heaven. The idea they leave in the community they quit; the contempt of that, which embraceth them; the odious character they acquire; the horrors of their own consciences: the thundering language of our scriptures; the dreadful examples of Judas, and Julian, of Hymeneus, Philetus, and Spira; the fires and flames of hell: these are arguments againt apostacy; these are the gains of those, who *sell the truth* in this manner.

2. But there is another order of men, to whom we would shew the justice of the precept of Solomon; they are persons, who *sell the truth*, through the fear of those punishments, which persecutors inflict on them, who have courage to hang out the bloody flag; I mean time-servers, Nicodemites, You know them, my brethren! Would to God, the misfortunes of the times had not given us an opportuity of knowing them so well! They are the imitators of that timid disciple, who admired Jesus Christ, who was fully convinced of the truth of

* Vid. Blondel des Sibilles. Liv. i chap. v. x. xix. and xxiv.

of his doctrine, stricken with the glory of his miracles, penetrated with the divinity of his mission, and his proselyte in his heart; but who, *for fear of the Jews*, John vii. 13. durst not venture to make an open profession of the truth, and, as the evangelist remarks, *went to Jesus by night*, chap. iii. 2. Thus our modern Nicodemites. They are shocked at superstition, they thoroughly know the truth, they form a multitude of ardent wishes for the prosperity of the church, and desire, they say, to see the soldiers of Jesus Christ openly march with their banners displayed, and to list themselves under them the first: but they only pretend, that, in time of persecution, when they cannot make an open profession without ruining their families, sacrificing their fortunes, and fleeing their country, it is allowable to yield to the times, to disguise their christianity, and to be anti-christian without, provided they be christians within.

1. But, if their pretences be well-grounded, what mean these express decisions of our scriptures? *Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in heaven: But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father, which is in heaven. He, that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me. And he, that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He, that findeth his life, shall lose it; and he, that loseth his life, for my sake, shall find it. Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels*, Matt. x. 32. Mark viii. 38.

2. If there be any ground for the pleas of temporizers, why do the scriptures set before us the examples of those believers, who walked in paths of tribulation, and followed Jesus christ with heroical firmness in steps of crucifixion, and martyrdom? Why record the example of the three children of Israel, who chose rather to be cast into a fiery furnace, than to fall down before a statue, set up by an idolatrous king? Dan. iii. 19. Why that of the martyrs, who suffered under the barbarous Antiochus, and the courage of that mother, who after she had seven times suffered death, so to speak, by seeing each of her seven sons put to death, suffered an eighth, by imitating their example, and by crowning their martyrdom with her own? Why that *cloud of witnesses, who through faith were stoned, were sawn asunder, were*

tempted, were slain with the sword, wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented? Heb. xi. 37.

3. If the pretences of time-servers be well-grounded, what was the design of the purest actions of the primitive church; of those councils, which were held on account of such as had the weakness to cast a grain of incense into the fire, that burned on the altar of an idol? Why those rigorous canons, which were made against them; those severe penalties, that were inflicted on them; those delays of their absolution, which continued till near the last moments of their lives?

If these pretences be allowable, what is the use of all the promises, which are made to confessors and martyrs; the *white garments*, that are reserved for them; the *palms* of victory, which are to be put in their hands; the crowns of glory, that are prepared for them; the reiterated declarations of the *author and finisher of their faith, To him, that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne. Hold that fast, which thou hast, that no man take thy crown*, Rev. iii. 21.

5. If these pretences be reasonable, would God have afforded so much miraculous assistance to his servants, the martyrs, in the time of their martyrdom? It was in the suffering of martyrdom, that St. Peter saw an angel, who opened the prison-doors to him, Acts xii. 7. In suffering martyrdom, Paul and Silas felt the prison, that confined them, shake, and their chains loosen and fall off, ver. 14. In suffering martyrdom, St. Stephen *saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God*, chap. xvi. 26. and viii. 56. In the suffering of martyrdom, Barlaam sang this song, *Blessed be the Lord, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight*, Psal. cxliv. 1.* It was during their martyrdom, that Perpetua and Felicitas saw a ladder studded with swords, daggers, and instruments of punishment, that reached up to heaven, at the top of which stood Jesus Christ encouraging them†. And you, my brethren, in participating the suffering of primitive believers, have you not partaken of their consolations? Sometims providence opened ways of escape, in spite of the vigilance of your enemies. Sometimes powerful protections, which literally fulfilled the promise of the gospel, that he, who should quit any temporal advantage for

* Basil. Tom. i. 440. Homil. 18. Edit. de Paris, 1638.
† Tertul. de anima. Cap. lv.

for the sake of it; should *receive an hundred fold even in this life.* Sometimes deliverances, which seemed perfectly miraculous. Sometimes a firmness equal to the most cruel tortures, an heroical courage, that astonished, yea, that wearied out your executioners. Sometimes transporting joys, which enabled you to say, *When we are weak, then are we strong. We are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. We glory in tribulations also.* So many reflections, so many arguments, which subvert the pretences of Nicodemites: and which prove, that, with the greatest reason, we place them among those, who betray the truth.

But, great God! to what am I doomed this day? Who are these time-servers, who are these Nicodemites, whose condemnation we are denouncing? How many of my auditors have near relations, inveloped in this misery? Where is there a family of our exiles, to which the words of a prophet may not be applied; *My flesh is in Babylon, and my blood among the inhabitants of Chaldea,* Jer. li. 35. Ah! shame of the reformation! Ah! fatal memoir! just cause of perpetual grief! Rome! who insultest, and gloriest over us, do not pretend to confound us with the sight of galleys, filled by thee with protestant-slaves, whose miseries thou dost aggravate with reiterated blows, with galling chains, with pouring vinegar into their wounds! Do not pretend to confound us by shewing us gloomy and filthy dungeons, inaccessible to every ray of light, the horror of which thou dost augment by leaving the bodies of the dead in those dens of the living: These horrid holes have been changed into delightful spots, by the influences of that grace, which God hath *shed abroad in the hearts* of the prisoners, Rom. v. 5. and by the songs of triumph which they have incessantly sung to his glory. Do not pretend to confound us, by shewing us our houses demolished, our families dispersed, our fugitive flocks driven to wander over the face of the whole world. These objects are our glory, and thine insults are our praise. Would'st thou cover us with confusion? Shew us, shew us the souls, which thou hast taken from us. Reproach us, not that thou hast extirpated heresy; but that thou hast caused us to renounce religion: not that thou hast made martyrs; but that thou hast made protestants apostates from *the truth.*

This is our tender part. Here it is that no sorrow is like our sorrow. On this account *tears run down the wall of the daughter of Zion like a river day and night,* Lam. ii. 18. What shall I say to you, my brethren, to comfort you

under your just complaints? Had you lost your fortunes I would tell you, a christian's treasure is in heaven. Had you been banished from your country only, I would tell you, a faithful soul finds its God in desert wildernesses, in dreary solitudes, and in the most distant climes. Had you lost only your churches, I would tell you, the favour of God is not confined to places and to walls. But, you weeping consorts! who shew me your husbands separated from Jesus Christ, by an abjuration of thirty years; what shall I say to you? What shall I tell you, ye tender mothers! who shew me your children lying at the foot of the altar of an idol?

O God! are thy compassions exhausted? Hath religion, that source of endless joy, no consolation to asswage our grief? These deserters of the truth are our friends, our brethren, other ourselves. Moreover, they are both apostates and martyrs: apostates, by their fall; martyrs, by their desire, although feeble, of rising again: apostates, by the fears, that retain them; martyrs, by the emotions that urge them: apostates, by the superstitious practices, which they are constrained to perform; martyrs, by the secret sighs and tears, which they address to heaven. O may the martyr obtain mercy for the apostate! May their frailty excuse their fall! May their repentance expiate their idolatry! or rather, May the blood of Jesus Christ, covering apostacy, frailty, and the imperfection of repentance itself, disarm thy justice, and excite thy compassion!

IV. We have put *Judges* in the fourth class of those, to whom the text must be addressed; *Sell not the truth.*

1. A judge *sells truth* if he be partial to him, whose cause is unjust, on account of his connections with him. When a Judge ascends the judgement-seat, he ought entirely to forget all the connections of friendship, and of blood. He ought to guard againt himself, lest the impressions, that connections have made on his heart, should alter the judgment of his mind, and should make him turn the scale in favour of those, with whom he is united by tender ties. He ought to *bear the sword* indifferently, Rom. xiii. 4. like mother Levi, against his brother, and against his friend, and to merit the praise, that was given to that holy man. *He said unto his father, and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children*, Deut. xxiii. 19. He ought to involve his eyes in a thick mist, through which it would be impossible for

for him to distinguish, from the rest of the crowd, persons for whom nature so powerfully pleads.

2. A judge *sells truth*, when he suffers himself to be dazzled with the false glare of the language of him, who pleads against justice. Some counsellors have the front to affirm a maxim, and to reduce it to practice, in direct opposition to the oaths they took, when they were invested with their character. The maxim I mean is this; as the business of a judge is to distinguish truth from falshood, so the business of a counsellor is, not only to place the rectitude of a cause in a clear light: but also to attribute to it all, that can be invented by a man, expert in giving sophistry the colours of demonstration and evidence. To suffer himself to be misled by the *ignes fatui* of eloquence, or to put on the air of being convinced, either to spare himself the trouble of discussing a truth, which the artifice of the pleader envelopes in obscurity; or to reward the orator in part for the pleasure he hath afforded him by the vivacity and politeness of his harangue: each of these is a *sale of truth*, a sacrificing of the rights of widows and orphans to a propriety of gesture, a tour of expression, a figure of rhetoric.

3. A judge *sells truth*, when he yields to the troublesome assiduity of an indefatigable solicitor. The practice of soliciting the judges is not the less irregular, for being authorized by custom. When people avail themselves of that access to judges, which, in other cases, belongs to their reputation, their titles, or their birth, they lay snares for their innocence. A client ought not to address his judges, except in the person of him, to whom he hath committed his cause, imparted his grounds of action, and left the making of the most of them. To regard solicitations instead of reproving them; to suffer himself to be carried away with the talk of a man, whom the avidity of gaining his cause inflames, inspires subtle inventions, and dictates emphatical expressions, is, again, to *sell truth*.

4. A judge *sells truth*, when he receives presents. *Thou shalt not take a gift; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous*, Deut. xvi. 19. God gave this precept to the Jews.

5. A judge makes *a sale of truth*, when he is terrified at the power of an oppressor. It hath been often seen, in the most august bodies, that suffrages have been constrained by the tyranny of some, and sold by the timidity of others. Tyrants have been known to attend, either in their own persons,

sons, or in those of their emissaries, in the very assemblies, which were convened on purpose to maintain the rights of the people, and to check the progress of tyranny. Tyrants have been seen to endeavour to direct opinions by signs of their hands, and by motions of their eyes; they have been known to intimidate judges by menaces, and to corrupt them by promises; and judges have been known to prostrate their souls before these tyrants, and to pay the same devoted deference to maxims of tyranny, that is due to nothing but to an authority tempered with equity. A judge on his tribunal ought to fear none but him, whose sword is committed to him. He ought to be not only a defender of *truth*, he ought also to become a martyr for it, and to confirm it with his blood, were his blood necessary to confirm it.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear, Matt. xi. 15. There is a primitive justice essential to moral beings; a justice independent on the will of any Supreme Being; because there are certain primitive and essential relations between moral beings, which belong to their nature. As, when you suppose a square, you suppose a being that hath four sides; as, when you suppose a body, you suppose a being, from which extent is inseparable, and independent on any positive will of a Superior Being; so, when you suppose a benefit, you suppose an equity, a justice, a fitness, in gratitude, because there is an essential relation between gratitude and benefit; and the same may be said of every moral obligation.

The more perfect an intelligent being is, the more intelligence is detached from prejudices, the clearer the ideas of an intelligent mind are, the more fully will it perceive the opposition and the relation, the justice and the injustice, that essentially belong to the nature of moral beings. In like manner, the more perfection an intelligence hath, the more doth it surmount irregular motions of the passions; and the more it approves justice, the more will it disapprove injustice; the more it is inclined to favour what is right, the more will it be induced to avoid what is wrong.

God is an intelligence, who possesseth all perfections; his ideas are perfect images of objects; and on the model of his all objects were formed. He seeth, with perfect exactness, the essential relations of justice, and of injustice. He is necessarily inclined, though without constraint, and by the nature of his perfections, to approve justice, and to disapprove

prove injustice; to display his attributes in procuring happiness to the good, and misery to the wicked.

In the present economy, a part of the reasons of which we discover, while some of the reasons of it are hidden in darkness, God doth not immediately distinguish the cause, that is founded on equity, from that which is grounded on iniquitous principles. This office he hath deposited in the hands of judges; he hath entrusted them with his power; he hath committed his sword to them; he hath placed them, on his tribunal; and said to them, *Ye are gods*, Psal. lxxxii. 6. But the more august the tribunal, the more inviolable the power, the more formidable the sword, the more sacred the office, the more rigorous will their punishments be, who, in any of the ways we have mentioned betray the interests of that *truth*, and justice, with which they are intrusted. Some judges have defiled the tribunal of *the Judge of all the earth*, Gen. xviii. 25. on which they were elevated. Into the bowels of the innocent they have thrust that sword, which was given them to maintain order, and to transfix those who subvert it. That supreme power, which God gave them, they have employed to war against that God himself, who vested them with it, and him they have braved with insolence and pride. *I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there; and I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked. If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he, that is higher than the highest, regardeth it, and there be higher than they. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Buy the truth; and sell it not*, Eccles. iii. 16. v. 8. and Psal. ii. 10.

V. This precept of Solomon, *Sell not the truth*, regardeth *the politician*, who, by a timid circumspection, useth an artful concealment, when he ought to probe state-wounds to the bottom, and to discover the real authors of its miseries, and the true causes of its decline. In these circumstances, it is not enough to mourn over public calamities in secret; they must be spoken of with firmness and courage: the statesman must be the mouth and the voice of all those oppressed people, whose only resources are prayers and tears; he must discover the fatal intrigues, that are whispered

pered in corners against his country; unvail the mysterious springs of the conduct of him, who, under pretence of public benefit, seeks only his own private emolument; he must publish the shame of him, who is animated with no other desire, than that of building his own house on the ruins of church and state; he must arouse him from his indolence, who deliberates by his own fire-side, when imminent dangers require him to adopt bold, vigorous, and effectual measures; he must, without scruple, sacrifice him, who himself sacrificeth to his own avarice, or ambition, whole societies; he must fully persuade other senators that, if the misfortunes of the times require the death of any, it must be that of him, who kindled the fire, and not of him, who is ready to shed the last drop of his blood to extinguish it. To keep fair with all, on these occasions, and by a timid silence to avoid incurring the displeasure of those, who convulse the state, and of those, who cry for vengeance against them, is a conduct, not only unworthy of a christian, but unworthy of a good patriot. Silence then is an atrocious crime, and to *suppress truth* is to *sell* it, to *betray* it.

How doth an orator merit applause, my brethren, when, being called to give his suffrage for the public good, he speaks with that fire, which the love of his country kindles, and knows no law but equity, and the safety of the people! With this noble freedom the heathens debated; their intrepidity astonisheth only those, who are destitute of courage to imitate them. Represent to yourselves Demosthenes speaking to his masters, and judges, and endeavouring to save them in spite of themselves, and in spite of the punishments, which they sometimes inflicted on those, who offered to draw them out of the abysses, into which they had plunged themselves. Represent to yourselves this orator making remonstrances, that would now-a-days pass for firebrands of sedition, and saying to his countrymen; *Will ye then eternally walk backward and forward in your public places, asking one another, What news? Is Philip dead? says one. No, replies another, but he is extremely ill. Ah! what does the death of Philip signify to you, gentlemen? No sooner would heaven have delivered you from him, than ye yourselves would create another Philip**. Imagine, you hear this orator blaming the Athenians for the greatness of their enemy; *For my part, gentlemen, I protest,*

* Prem. Philipiq.

test, I could not help venerating Philip, and trembling at him, if his conquests proceeded from his own valour, and from the justice of his arms: but whoever closely examines the true cause of the fame of his exploits, will find it in our faults; his glory originates in our shame.* Represent to yourselves this orator plunging a dagger into the hearts of the perfidious Athenians, even of them, who indulged him with their attention, and loaded him with their applause. *War, immortal war with every one, who dares here to plead for Philip. You must absolutely despair of conquering your enemies without, while you suffer them to have such advocates within. Yet you are arrived at this pitch of, what shall I call it? imprudence, or ignorance. I am often ready to think, an evil genius possesseth you. You have brought yourselves to give these miserable, these perfidious wretches a hearing, some of whom dare not disown the character I give them. It is not enough to hear them, whether it be envy, or malice, or an itch for satire, or whatever be the motive, you order them to mount the rostrum, and taste a kind of pleasure as often as their outrageous railleries and cruel calumnies rend in pieces reputations the best established, and attack virtue the most respectable†.* Such an orator, my brethren, merits the highest praise. With whatever chastisements God may correct a people, he hath not determined their destruction, while he preserveth men, who are able to shew them in this manner the means of preventing it.

VI. Finally, the last order of persons, interested in the words of my text, consists of *pastors* of the church. And who can be more strictly engaged not to *sell truth* than the ministers of the God of *truth?* A pastor should have this precept in full view in our public assemblies, in his private visits, and particularly when he attends dying people.

1. In our *public assemblies* all is consecrated to *truth.* Our churches are houses of the living and *true* God. These pillars are *pillars of truth*, 1. Tim. iii. 15. The *word*, that we are bound to announce to you, *is truth*, John xvii. 17. Wo be to us, if any human consideration be capable of making us disguise that *truth*, the heralds of which we ought to be; or if the fear of shewing you a disagreeable

* Prem. Olynth. † Trois Phil.

light induce us *to put it under a bushel!* True, there are some mortifying truths: but public offences merit public reproofs, whatever shame may cover the guilty, or however eminent, and elevated, their post may be. We know not a sacred head, when we see *the name of blasphemy* written on it, Rev. xiij. 1. But the ignominy of such reproof, say ye, will debase a man in the sight of the people, whom the people ought to respect, and will disturb the peace of society. But who is responsible for this disturbance, he, who reproves vice, or he who commits it? And ought not he, who abandons himself to vice, rather to avoid the practice of it, than he, who censures such a conduct, to cease to censure it? If any claim the power of imposing silence on us, on this article, let him produce his right; let him publish his pretensions; let him distribute among those who have been chosen to ascend this pulpit, lists of the vices, which we are forbidden to censure: let him signify the law, that commands the reproving of the offences of the poor, but forbids that of the crimes of the rich? that allows us to censure men without credit, but prohibits us to reprove people of reputation.

2. A pastor ought to have this precept before his eyes in his *private visits.* Let him not publish before a whole congregation a secret sin: but let him paint it in all its horrid colours with the same privacy with which it was committed. To do this is the principal design of those pastoral visits, which are made among this congregation to invite the members of it to the Lord's supper. There a minister of truth ought to trouble that false peace, which impunity nourisheth in the souls of the guilty. There he ought to convince people, that the hiding of crimes from the eyes of men cannot conceal them from the sight of God. There he ought to make men tremble at the idea of that eye, from the penetration of which neither the darkness of the night, nor the most impenetrable depths of the heart can conceal any thing.

Our ideas of a minister of Jesus Christ are not formed on our fancies: but on the descriptions, which God hath given us in his word; and on the examples of the holy men, who went before us in the church, whose glorious steps, we wish (although alas! so far inferior to these models,) whose glorious steps we wish to follow. See how these sacred men announced the truth. Hear Samuel to Saul; *Wherefore didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord. Hath*

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the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices; as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold! to obey is better than sacrifice; and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry, 1 Sam. xv. 19. 22. Behold Nathan before David. *Thou art the man. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun,* 2 Sam. xii. 7—12. See Elijah before Ahab, who said to him, *Art thou he that troubleth Israel? I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalam,* 1 Kings xviii. 17, 18. and not to increase this list by quoting examples from the new testament, see Jeremiah. Never was a minister more gentle. Never was a heart more sensibly affected with grief than his at the bare idea of the calamities of Jerusalem. Yet were there ever more terrible descriptions of the judgments of God, than those, which this prophet gave? When we need any fiery darts to wound certain sinners, it is he, who must furnish them. He often speaks of nothing but sackcloth and ashes, lamentation and woe. He announceth nothing but mortality, famine, and slavery. He represents the *earth without form, and void,* returned, as it were, to its primitive chaos; *the heavens* destitute of *light; the mountains trembling; the hills moving lightly.* He cannot find *a man; Carmel* is a *wilderness,* and the whole world a desolation. All the inhabitants of Jerusalem seem to him *climbing up upon the rocks,* or running into *thickets* to hide themselves from *the horsemen and the bowmen.* When he strives *to hold his peace,* his *heart maketh a noise in him,* Jer iv. 23. 24. 26. 29. 19. His whole imagination is filled with bloody images. He is distorted, if I may speak so, with the poison of that cup of vengeance, which was about to be presented to the whole earth. A minister announcing nothing but

maledictions seems a conspirator against the peace of a kingdom. Jeremiah was accused of holding a correspondence with the king of Babylon. It was pretended, that either hatred to his country, or a melancholy turn of mind, produced his sorrowful prophecies; nothing, but punishment, was talked of for him, and, at length, he was confined in *a miry dungeon*, chap. xxxviii. 6. In that filthy dungeon the love of *truth* supported him.

3. But when a pastor is called *to attend a dying person*, he is more especially called to remember this precept of Solomon, *Sell not the truth.* On this article, my brethren, I wish to know the most accessible paths to your hearts; or rather, on this article, my brethren I wish to find the unknown art of uniting all your hearts, so that every one of our hearers might receive, at least, from the last periods of this discourse, some abiding impressions. In many dying people a begun work of conversion is to be finished. Others are to be comforted under the last and most dangerous attacks of the enemy of their salvation, who terrifies them with the fear of death. In regard to others, we must endeavour to try whether our last efforts to reclaim them to God will be more successful than all our former endeavours. Can any reason be assigned to counterbalance the motives, which urge us to speak plainly in these circumstances? A soul is ready to perish; the sentence is preparing: the irrevocable voice, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*, will presently sound; the gulphs of hell yawn; the devils attend to seize their prey. One single method remains to be tried: the last exhortations and efforts of a pastor. He cannot entertain the least hope of success, unless he unvail mysteries of iniquity, announce odious truths, attack prejudices, which the dying man continues to cherish, even though eternal torments are following close at their heels. Woe be to us if any human consideration stop us on these pressing occasions, and prevent our making the most of this, the last resource!

It belongs to you, my brethren, to render this last act of our office to you practicable. It belongs to you to concur with your pastors in sending away company, that we may open our hearts to you, and that you may open your's to us. Those visitors, who, under pretence of collecting the last words of an expiring man, cramp, and interrupt him, who would prepare him to die, should repress their unseasonable zeal. If, when we require you to speak to us alone on your death-

death-bed, we be animated with any human motive; if we aim to penetrate into your family secrets; if we wish to share your estate; pardon traitors, assassins, and the worst of murderers; but let national justice inflict all its rigours on those, who abuse the weakness of a dying man, and, in functions so holy, are animated with motives so profane. In all cases, except in this one, we are ready to oblige you. A minister, on this occasion, ought not only not to fall, he ought not to stumble. But how can you expect that, in the presence of a great number of witnesses, we should fully expatiate on some truths to a sinner? Would you advise us to tell an immodest woman of the excesses, to which she had abandoned herself, in the presence of an easy credulous husband? Would you have us in the presence of a whole family discover the shame of its head?

Here I finish this meditation. I love to close all my discourses with ideas of death. Nothing is more proper to support those, who experience the difficulties, that attend the path of virtue, than thinking that the period is at hand, which will terminate the path, and reward the pain. Nothing is more proper to arouse others, than thinking that the same period will quickly imbitter their wicked pleasures.

Let every person of each order, to which the text is addressed, take the pains of applying it to himself. May the meanness of flatterers; may the pious frauds of indiscreet zealots; may the fear of persecution, and the love of the present world, which make such deep impressions on the minds of apostates and Nicodemites; may the partiality of judges; may the sinful circumspection of statesmen, may all the vices be banished from among us. Above all, we, who are ministers of *truth!* let us never disguise *truth;* let us love *truth;* let us preach *truth;* let us preach it in this pulpit; let us preach it in our private visits; let us preach it by the bed-sides of the dying. In such a course we may safely apply to ourselves, in our own dying-beds, the words of those prophets and apostles, with whom we ought to concur in *the work of the ministry, in the perfecting of the saints. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. I have kept back nothing, that was profitable. I have taught publicly, and from house to house. I am pure from the blood of all men. I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. O my God! I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained*

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my lips, O Lord thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy loving-kindness, and thy truth from the great congregation. With-hold not thou thy tender mercies from me O Lord; let thy loving kindness and thy truth continually preserve them, Eph. iv. 12. Acts xx. 33. 20. 26. &c. Amen.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.